



THE LIFE
OF
St. Francis de Sales

BY

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P. J. KENEDY AND SONS

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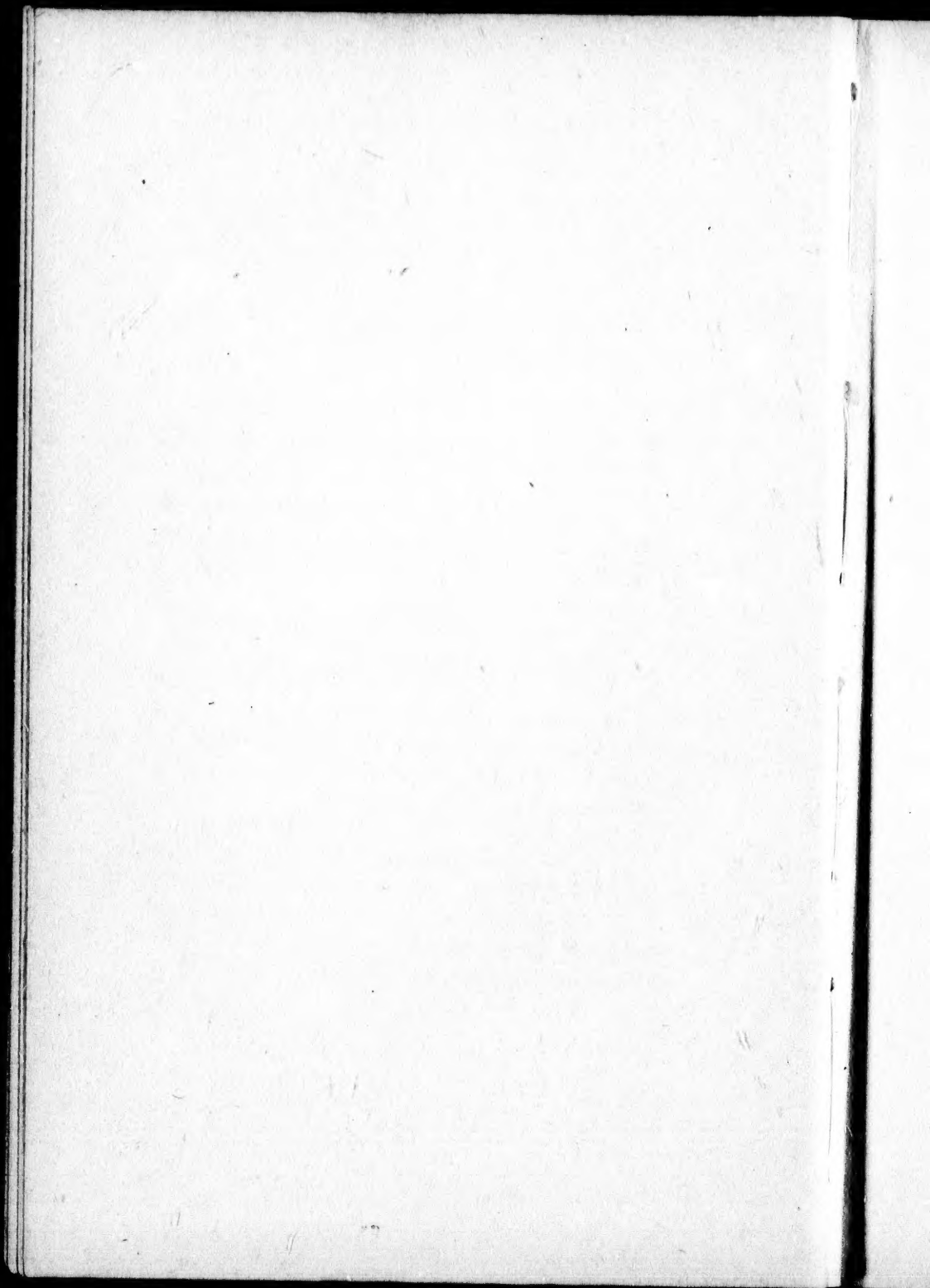
NO. 44 BARCLAY STREET, N. Y.

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PREFACE.

God never makes two things alike. It is one of the privileges of Omnipotence to show that, in adhering to the laws which It has Itself created, it is still those laws' Master. We, on the other hand, usually play the part of a machine. We can but repeat ourselves, and be the precise copyists of our own feebly-conceived and defectively-executed originals. We multiply repetitions of our works with the servile accuracy of a mechanical apparatus. We first devise by the aid of the line, the rule, and the square; and then we can but return again and again to our first pattern, varying it only through infirmity, and counting ourselves most successful when we have reproduced it with a most painful geometric minuteness.

But He who created the world and the laws within whose limits we toil is as infinitely varied in the details of His works as those works themselves are infinite in number. The stars differ from one another in glory. Of the uncounted

varieties of flowers, no two are alike. In all the bewildering myriads of the leaves of a forest, even our coarse perceptions can detect some slight variations in form. Every feature in nature, from an Alpine precipice to a crystallised fragment, is unlike any other. Such is the abyss of the wisdom of God in the creation of the organised universe.

The same mysterious variety is found to prevail, not only in our own countenances and figures, in our intellects and emotions, as we are by nature, but in the most perfect works of Divine Grace. It is curious to think how different the "Saints" are from what they would have been if they had been all fashioned on a type invented by human ingenuity. It makes one smile to think what singular phenomena would have been turned out from a humanly-conducted laboratory, when contrasted with the actual Saints, such as Almighty God has Himself made them. In matters of right and wrong, strictly speaking, we have all of us been taught by Almighty God; and consequently our *beau-ideal* of a "Saint" implies the presence of all virtues in the heroic degree. But when we come to the outward clothing which this heroic sanctity should wear, it is certain that if we had the work to do, we should fabricate Saints after a fashion wonderfully unlike that which has of-

ten been adopted by Eternal Wisdom. No doubt we should produce a good many varieties, according to our national and personal ideas of the *καλοκαγαθόν*,—"the good, the beautiful, and the true." The Englishman's Saint would be different from the Frenchman's, and the Frenchman's from the German's or the Italian's; and all these again from the Negro's, or the Saint of the Japanese.

Still, it may be assumed as an undoubted truth, that we are generally more or less surprised to find that the *externals* of sanctity are so different from those which we should have anticipated. With all that we say—and believe also—on the subject of "hidden Saints," and of the essentially retiring and modest nature of sanctity, there are few persons who do not expect that the heroic virtue of a real Saint should show itself in some quiet way or other, so as to be cognisable by an ordinary Christian of fair good sense and piety. Still more do we expect that Saints shall have nothing about them which, as the saying is, shall "run into us." We look for such an absence of infirmities in those things which are solely and entirely natural, that the Saint may at once interest and please the Christian, and silence the silly ill-nature of the unbeliever.

When, then, we turn to the actual lives of the Saints, it is striking to find how seldom they have been suspected to be Saints even by the general run of good Catholics, and still less by the common crowd. Sometimes their extraordinary graces have been known to so few, that it may be said that they were almost literally unknown. So far as the externals of life were concerned, they have been for the most part like other men. Grace left nature, in all things but sin, pretty much as it would have been if they had been nothing more than simply good Christians. And accordingly they have varied from one another in just the same variety which prevails among those who are not Saints. Not only their circumstances, rank, and influence have been very different in different cases, but they have been gifted with very different degrees of what we may call "attractiveness," as other persons so singularly differ in that peculiar gift. Nor is it any disparagement to the perfection of the work of God in them, that one Saint is of such a character as to attach to his memory a far larger number of devout clients than can ever be gained by another. Some men are made to be universal favourites in daily life, wherever they go. Others, quite their equals, sometimes their superiors, in every important quality, compara

tively stand apart, unbefriended and alone. This is a result of that boundless variety which exists in the natural characters which God has given to us, following His own impenetrable wisdom.

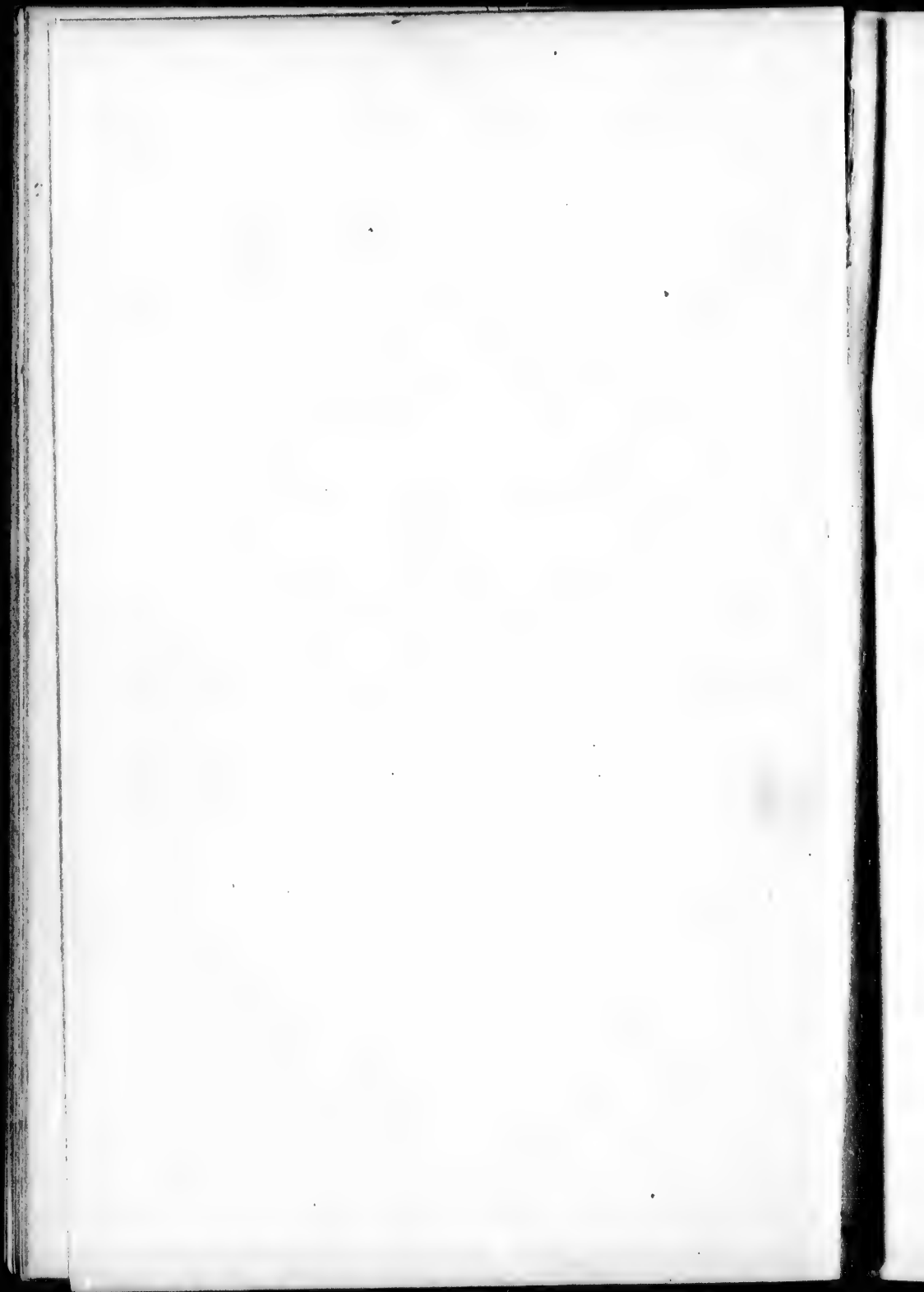
And so it is with the Saints. There are those to whom intercession is daily made by tens of thousands of Christians; while others are known only by their place in the calendar, and are honoured by a devout rule rather than by the personal choice of the individual Christian. We all have our "favourite Saints." It is often difficult to say why we prefer to have recourse to one rather than to another, as it is hard to say why we enjoy one man's society, and care little for that of another. But so it is, and so it will be as long as the world lasts, and both the Saints, and we who honour them, are what we are.

The Saint whose life has suggested these remarks is perhaps—next, of course, to the Queen of Saints—the "favourite Saint" of the whole calendar, wherever his writings are known and understood. There appears in the mind of St. Francis of Sales that union of sweetness and strength of manly power and feminine delicacy, of profound knowledge and practical dexterity, which constitute a character formed at once to win and subdue minds of almost every type and

age. As the rose among flowers, so is he among Saints. From the thorny, woody fibre of the brier comes forth that blossom which unites all that can make a flower lovely and attractive; and from the hot and vehement nature of the young Savoyard came a spiritual bloom whose beauty and fragrance were perfect in an extraordinary degree. All things that command respect and attract love were found in Francis. High rank, polish of manner, geniality of disposition, shrewdness of head, vivacity of imagination, a capacity for profound theological studies, a rare felicity in the use of language, a captivating grace of manner, an almost unrivalled power as a director of souls, activity without bustle, mortification without sadness,—all these things won him a reputation and a body of affectionate friends while he lived, and a cloud of clients since he died, which it would not be easy to parallel in the case of any other of the band of Saints. Few men, moreover, have possessed such wisdom and candour in matters theological and controversial. A lover of gentle means in an age of persecution; a hearty Frenchman without Gallicanism; an Ultramontane without exaggeration; a spiritual guide who could conduct souls with the reverent delicacy of a true mystic and the piercing shrewdness of a man of

the world,—he still lives by his writings, to be accepted as at once one of the safest, the most satisfying, and the most profound teachers of that wisdom which is revealed to all the Saints; but which it is given to few to communicate with the fulness and beauty with which it ever flows from his lips.

J. M. C





THE LIFE

OF

St. Francis de Sales.

CHAPTER I.

HIS EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION.



ST. FRANCIS DE SALES belongs to that class of Saints, the lustre of whose lineage, and whose conspicuous station in the world, have corresponded to their rank in the celestial kingdom. Scarcely any condition of life could be named that has not afforded the material of heroic sanctity. A labourer like St. Isidore, a merchant like St. Francis of Assisi, a soldier like St. Camillus of Lellis, a servant-girl like St. Zita, a shepherdess like the Blessed Germaine Cousin, furnish, in the more ordinary, or in the humblest walks of life, examples of the same holiness which, in St. Henry or St. Louis, adorned the crown of empire or royalty. The Saint of whose life we are about to give a sketch was not, indeed, of such exalted rank as these last; still his birth placed him in the highest class of society. He was the eldest son of one of the principal nobles of Savoy,—John

Lord of Sales, of Boisy, of Balleyson, and of Villaroget, usually styled by the second of those titles. His mother, Frances, daughter of Melchior de Syonnas, Lord of La Thuille and of Vallières, came of no less noble stock. Francis was born at their ancestral castle of Sales (a magnificent seat near Annecy, which was afterwards destroyed by order of Louis XIII. during his war with Savoy), on Aug. 21, 1567. His biographers give some curious anecdotes of his childish life, derived from his nurse, a good creature, who from the first believed she had charge of a saint. These stories are too minute for an outline like this; but they show the germs of that sweet and beautiful character which afterwards made his name, as it were, perfume the whole Church with its fragrance. Even before Francis could speak, his attendants found that he was never so happy as when they carried him into a church. Like most great and holy men, he had the blessing of having an excellent mother, who took care that the foundations of piety were well laid in his earliest years. His father appears to have been a good specimen of the nobleman of the old school; honourable, single-minded, and chivalrous, and at the same time full of dignity and self-respect. He had a numerous family, all of them of lofty principle and interesting character. Our Saint was the eldest son; the second and third were Galoys Lord of Boisy, and Louis Lord of La Thuille; the former of whom was famous for his skill in reconciling those at variance,—a quality which, in those troublous times, he was often called on to exercise. Louis also lived a holy life in the world, and was the father of Charles Auguste, the pious biographer of the Saint, and his second successor in the see of Geneva. Next came John Francis, who was his vicar-general, coadjutor, and immediate successor. The fifth brother was Bernard (there was an ancient affinity between the house of Sales and that of the Saint of that name) Baron of Thorens, who married a daughter of St. Jane Frances de Chantal, and who died at an early age. Jazua, the

sixth brother, a knight of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem, is described as a gallant cavalier of the olden days. There were two sisters: Gasparde, married to the Lord of Cornillon, a worthy lady, who followed the noble examples set by her brothers; and "Mademoiselle Jeanne," who died very young, after affording great promise from her innocent and virtuous character. Altogether it was a noble household, fit to be headed by a saint.

Francis was sent in early childhood to the college of La Roche, and afterwards to that of Annecy. He was from the first marked out among his young companions for his superior manliness and gravity of demeanour. Whilst the rest rambled about in schoolboy fashion, hatless and unbuttoned, amusing themselves with boyish pursuits, he was always carefully dressed; and, instead of joining in their amusements, would stay at home and read to the old lady at whose house he boarded. He was, however, well trained in all the accomplishments which in those days were considered essential to the rank of a young noble; he was taught to dance, to fence, and to ride; and these exercises he learnt well, being always particularly noticed for that graceful, dignified, and easy deportment, which is seldom attained without such training in early life. He was five years at the college of Annecy, and learned there the Latin language, and "made notable progress in the humanities;" by which phrase, now getting antiquated, the old school meant that general cultivation in polite literature which informed and moulded the mind so as to be well furnished with the habits and ideas peculiarly belonging to "the scholar and the gentleman." He was a hard student, an early riser; but moderate in sitting up at night. At the age of eleven he entreated permission of his father to take the tonsure, having at that early age decided to adopt the ecclesiastical life. M. de Boisv by no means desired this, for his ambition was that his eldest son should make a great figure in the world; but with that sort of

management which men of great experience often prefer to violent measures, he permitted him to do as he pleased. The old lord knew that the tonsure did not bind his son finally to become an ecclesiastic; and depended on the changes a young man's mind goes through, to dissipate this predilection. In most cases his sagacity would not have been at fault; but he did not as yet know that his son was a saint. The youthful Francis received the tonsure in Sept. 1578. To show how the simplest temptations sometimes affect heroic minds, we may mention that the youthful Saint felt a pang of extreme repugnance when his long and beautiful hair was about to be cut off. He generously made the sacrifice; but did not entirely regain his tranquillity till it was over.

In 1580 he was sent to pursue his studies in the University of Paris. His father had intended to send him to the college of Navarre, which, out of the many in that famous university, was the chief resort of the young noblesse of Savoy; but at the earnest entreaty of Francis, the college of the Jesuits was fixed upon for him. Here he remained five years, making great acquisitions in the various branches of the learned education of the age. He studied Greek under the Père Sirmond, whose vast erudition in ecclesiastical antiquity was evinced by many great works; theology under John Francis Suarez, doubtless an accomplished teacher, though not to be confounded with the more famous theologian of that name. Another of his theological masters was Dandini, one of the greatest Aristotelians of the day, who was afterwards sent out as Apostolic Nuncio to the Maronites of Mount Libanus. Francis was most diligent in taking notes of the lectures which he attended; and his manuscripts, which still remain, are a curiosity for their elegance and precision. "From the first word to the last," says his most recent biographer, "every thing in them is of an exquisite neatness, exceedingly careful, perfectly distinct and easy to read, provided one has acquired a

complete acquaintance and a sort of habituation with the abbreviations used in it. All the margins are covered with notices of the divisions and subdivisions, with the various heads of proof, and form, as it were, an analysis of the whole work; finally, one recognises throughout not only the orderly mind which does every thing well, but also the logical mind which classifies its ideas, and furnishes itself with a clear and precise account of them." One study, unusual in that age, to which he addicted himself, was the Hebrew language, which he learned under a celebrated teacher of the day, Genebrard, who afterwards became Archbishop of Aix. His scriptural studies were very profound, as we find continually exemplified in his theological treatises, where he frequently illustrates the meaning of texts by reference to the Septuagint. His private tutor for this period, and indeed for the rest of his education also, was the Abbé Déage, a good man, but addicted to hold the reins of discipline rather tightly; which brings out some amusing scenes, where his ill-temper, and yet the affectionate love with which he regarded his charge, contrasts with the heroic humility of the young noble. At Paris one of the most remarkable and critical events of his life took place, a terrible temptation to despair, which came on suddenly and lasted for a considerable time, but from which he was released in a wonderful manner. He was about the age of seventeen when the idea took possession of his mind that he was not in a state of grace, and that consequently there was a frightful probability of his being eternally lost. His soul was overwhelmed with fear, which he in vain tried to reason away. When he represented to himself the promises of Almighty God to help those who call upon Him, the consciousness of his own weakness came on to stifle the rising hope. He might fall into mortal sin; feeble as he was, it seemed to him certain he would do so if a dangerous occasion occurred. The gulf of hell thus seemed to open before him at the very time when scarcely a deliberate venial sin had stained his

innocence. Yet at the very time he was going through this awful conflict, he gave the most beautiful answers to the temptations which assailed him. "O Lord," he cried, "if I am not to see Thee, let my pain at least have this assuagement,—permit me not ever to curse or blaspheme Thee. O Love, O Charity, O Beauty, to whom I have vowed all my affections, am I never, then, to enjoy Thy delights? am I never, then, to be inebriated with the abundance of the goods of Thy house? Am I never, then, to pass to the place of that adorable tabernacle where my God dwells? O Virgin all-loving, thou whose charms cannot rejoice the regions of hell, am I never, then, to see thee in the kingdom of thy Son? Beautiful as the moon, shining like the sun, am I never to share in the immense benefit of the Resurrection? But did not my sweet Jesus die for me, as well as for the rest? Ah, be it as it may, Lord, if I cannot love Thee in the next life, since no one praises Thee in hell, may I at least profit by all the moments of my short existence here to love Thee!" He seems, if it were possible, to have suffered the very agonies of hell, without the loss of the love of God. It seems as though an angel had caught him by the hair, and held him over the very flames of that dark lake of endless sorrow. Considering what he was to become in after-life, the guide and comforter of such a multitude of minds, in every variety of spiritual suffering, it was necessary, in order to give him the means for such universal sympathy, for himself to have suffered the same. Without supernatural means, indeed, a person of angelic innocence like Francis could not have sounded those unusual depths of human agony. The temptations, as we have said, lasted for a long time, not less than six weeks; during which he was hardly able to eat, or drink, or sleep. He lost his colour and his strength; he went about haggard and trembling, like one whose whole energies were breaking up. Indeed, it may be said that for him to have survived such a horrible impression at all, of itself showed that the im-

pression was supernatural. During all this time he never gave up any of his usual exercises of devotion; but, on the contrary, increased them considerably, and did his utmost to strengthen his soul by recalling all the various consolatory passages from Holy Writ. There still exists a paper written by him, in which he recapitulates these in a most touching manner. It is too long to be inserted here at length; but a few sentences from the commencement of it will show what a depth both of intellect and of holiness there must have been in this youth of seventeen. "Prostrated at the feet of St. Augustine and St. Thomas, prepared to be ignorant of all things, that I may know Him Who is the Wisdom of the Father, Christ crucified; although I doubt not that the things which I have written are true, because I see nothing that can cause a doubt of their solid truth; yet as I see not all things, and so hidden a mystery is too bright to be looked at fixedly by my dim eyes; if hereafter the contrary should appear, which I suppose never will be—yea, if, which the Lord Jesus forbid, I knew that I were damned by that will which Thomas declares to be in God, that He might show His justice,—I, willingly confounded, and looking up to the Judge most high, would say with the Prophet, Shall not my soul be subject to God? Yea, Father, for so it hath seemed good in Thy sight; Thy will be done. And this, in the bitterness of my soul, I would say so often, till God, changing my life and His sentence, would answer me: Be confident, my son; I desire not the death of the wicked, but rather that he live . . . thou shalt not go down into hell; but thou shalt go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob." The temptation, however, though so generously combated, remained for weeks, and his health began to fail under it. He became wasted to a skeleton, and moved about like a ghost; so that all his friends became alarmed about him. At length this great cross disappeared as suddenly as it came. He one day entered the church of St. Etienne-des-Grés,

and knelt down before an image of the Blessed Virgin. His eye was caught by a tablet on the wall, on which was inscribed the famous prayer of St. Bernard, the efficacy of which has been verified by such countless graces: "Remember, O most holy Virgin Mary." He repeated it with great emotion; and implored, through the intercession of Mary, that it might please God to restore his peace of mind. He also made a vow of perpetual chastity; and promised to recite the chaplet of six decades daily in memory of it. All at once he felt his soul in tranquillity. The dark thoughts which had hung over him for so many weeks, seemed to come off from his mind like the scales from a leper when miraculously cleansed. He came out from the church in that sweet and profound calmness of mind which he never afterwards lost. He fulfilled his resolution of reciting the chaplet daily, and also added to it the *Memorare*, which he recommended to all his penitents.

After having spent five years at Paris with great profit, he returned home for a short visit. His father then decided on sending him to finish his education at the University of Padua, the legal schools of which at that time had the highest reputation throughout Europe. Thither he arrived at the beginning of the year 1587, and recommenced his studies under the care of professors of great celebrity, the principal of whom was Guido Pansiruolo, more generally known under the name of Pancirolus, whose fame is even yet not forgotten by students of the civil law, on which he wrote some very elaborate works. His spiritual director was a man not less remarkable, the Jesuit Possevinus, who had retired to Padua after a great career in ecclesiastical diplomacy. He had been apostolic nuncio in Sweden, where he succeeded in reconciling John III. to the Catholic Church; and had afterwards carried on important negotiations on behalf of the Holy See in Poland and Russia. His influence had a large share in the formation of the character of Francis de Sales. It was he who, after

long deliberations and many prayers, finally decided that his holy disciple ought to adopt the ecclesiastical career in preference to the bar, which his father wished for him. He taught him the Jesuit method of meditation, fresh from the traditions of the great St. Ignatius. He read with him the sacred Scriptures, being perhaps the first exegetical divine of that age; and under his instruction Francis learned above all to prize those three great authors, who throughout life were the chief sources of his learning, St. Thomas, St. Bonaventure, and Cardinal Bellarmine.

At the University of Padua, his demeanour, of which we have comparatively abundant records, was such as to furnish quite an ideal for the Catholic student to aim at. The place was one of immense temptations; the license of the mediæval universities still prevailed there, and virtue was in great danger. On two occasions he was brought into the very furnace of trial. A party of his fellow-students resolved to put his purity to the test, and made a regular conspiracy for this wicked purpose; taking him to what they pretended was the house of a newly-arrived professor of jurisprudence, where they had engaged a courtesan to allure him to sin. They introduced this miserable woman to him as if she were a lady of the family, and then left the room on one excuse or other. Presently she changed her manner, and attempted to entice him by immodest gestures. The moment he perceived her real character, he rushed out of the room, spitting in her face when she attempted to detain him. Thus the temptation which these instruments of Satan had prepared to destroy his soul, only redounded to his glory, and covered them with shame. On another occasion, whilst at Padua, a lady of the loftiest rank of the nobility conceived a violent passion for him, and sought to lead him astray from the paths of virtue, bribing one of his fellow-students to try to further her wicked designs by his persuasions. The holy youth treated the proposal with horror, sharply rebuked the base messenger, and

ordered him out of his presence. The instantaneous dignity of holiness with which he repelled these temptations, showed what a treasure of grace he had acquired at that early and critical age.

Whilst at Padua he made a plan of life for himself, which contains many remarkable points, and is well worth the study of every young man engaged in the academic career. It is hardly necessary to say, that regularity in meditation and in hearing the holy Mass are the leading rules which he adopts. The chief biographical interest which attaches to them is to observe at what an early period he had developed in his mind the spiritual method which pervades the *Introduction to a Devout Life*. He lays great stress on what he calls "the exercise of preparation." His words are: "I will always give the preference above every thing else to the exercise of *preparation*, and I will perform 't once at least in the day, viz. in the morning." He divides it into five parts: the invocation of the Divine help; the imagination or anticipation of what he has to do; the arrangement of it; the making a resolution of not offending God; and finally, the recommendation of his affairs to the Divine goodness. On the second head he says: "I will simply think of all those things which may occur to me; of the company in which I may be obliged to remain; of the affairs which may arise; of the places in which I must be; of the occasions which may happen to take me off my guard; and thus, by the help of the Lord, I will meet difficulties wisely and prudently." Then as to the arrangement of his actions: "I will consider and diligently inquire what are the best means of avoiding falls; I will see what it is expedient to do, in what order I must proceed in this or that affair; what I ought to say in society. I will decide as to my dress and demeanour, and determine what I must seek and what I must avoid." The rules, which are in Latin, are sometimes singularly expressed. Thus the passage where we have given the word "society" is, "*quid in consuetudine dicere a. deam.*" In Francis's own French

version it is, "*de ce que je dirai en compagnie.*" Meditation he calls, by a highly refined metaphor, "the sleep of the soul," because it refreshes the mind as rest does the body; and again, as in bodily sleep the operations of the body do not act beyond themselves, but are restrained within the limits of the body, so, says the youthful saint, "I will keep all my spiritual faculties within the limits of the spirit." This is a passage full of the most suggestive wisdom, and containing one of the choicest rules of meditation, inculcating that drawing-off the mind from things of sense which St. Catharine of Sienna called the building of a cell within her heart; and which another holy person, B. Leonardo Fattore, signified by this expression, "the land of faith." "The land of faith" was a certain state of the soul, calm, equable, and penetrated with the conviction of the truths of religion, in which he placed it occasionally when in the midst of the business and trials of life. To return, however, to Francis. If he cannot find time at the usual hour for this "most vigilant sleep of the soul," he resolves to deprive himself of a portion of his bodily sleep in order to it, either by remaining awake after he goes to bed, or rousing himself after his first sleep, or rising earlier than usual. He provides beautiful thoughts for himself from the sacred Scriptures if he chances to wake during the night: "I will rouse my heart with the words: *Medi nocte clamor factus est: Ecce sponsus venit, exite obviam ei*; 'At midnight there was a cry made: Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet Him.' Then, from the consideration of the darkness outside of me, passing on to the inward darkness of my soul and of all sinners, thus I will pray during the night: *Illuminare his qui in tenebris*, &c.; 'To enlighten them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to direct our feet into the way of peace.'" He adds: "But since nightly terrors sometimes hinder the acts of such devotion, if I chance to be seized with them, I will deliver myself from them by thinking of my angel-guardian, saying, *Dominus a dextris meos*

est, ne commoveat; which some doctors have interpreted of the angel-guardian." We may illustrate this curious passage from a letter of his, in which he says to the religious sister to whom he writes: "They tell me, my very dear daughter, that you are afraid of ghosts. The supreme Spirit of our God is every where, without whose will and permission no spirit stirs. He who fears that Divine Spirit ought to fear no other spirit. I, when I was young, was touched by this fantasy; and to rid myself of it, I forced myself, little by little, to go alone, my heart armed with confidence in God, into places where my imagination threatened me with fear; and at last I strengthened myself so, that the darknesses and solitude of the night are a delight to me, because of that omnipresence of God which one enjoys more at will in that solitude. The good angels are around you like a company of soldiers on watch. This assurance will be acquired by degrees, as the grace of God shall grow in you." (*Letter 407.*)

The subjects which he marks down for meditation, though not differing from those to be found in ordinary books (which, indeed, have ever since his time been much coloured by his writings), are expressed in a highly original manner. Thus he resolves, when he has an opportune time for this "holy quiet," to recal the pious emotions, longings, desires, resolutions, sweetnesses, and inspirations, which he has formerly received from the Divine Majesty; and also to call to mind how great his obligation is to Almighty God, "in that in His mercy He has at times weakened my senses by some diseases and infirmities, which have been of no little advantage to me." There is also a short and admirable reflection on the excellence of Christian virtue, "which sanctifies a man, which changes him into an angel, which makes him a little God (*deulum*), which in this life confers paradise on him." Lastly are some wonderful thoughts on the attributes of God. "I will contemplate," he says, "the infinite wisdom, omnipotence, and incomprehensible goodness of God; but I will specially aim at this, how these

excellent attributes shine forth in the sacred mysteries of the life, death, and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, in the most eminent holiness of our Lady, Blessed Mary; and in the imitable perfections of the faithful servants of God. Passing from hence to the empyrean heaven, I will marvel at the glory of paradise, the un-failing felicity of the angelic spirits and of the souls of the blessed; and how the most august Trinity, in the eternal rewards wherewith It remunerates this blessed multitude, shows Itself powerful, wise, and good."

There is also a set of rules for his conduct in society, so highly curious and interesting, that we shall give them almost at full length. They are written in singular and rather difficult Latin, of which the following seems to be the result, expressed in the language of the present age and in the third person, but, with that limitation, adhering as closely as possible to the phraseology of the writer:

1. He first distinguishes between general society (*congressus*) and intimate friendship (*consuetudo*). In the former, we see people only for a short time, and without any particular demonstrations of affection; in the latter, we often meet, we show familiarity, entertain affection, and visit our chosen friends, in order to live in a praiseworthy manner, and mutually advise with each other.

2. He resolves never to despise, or to give indications that he absolutely avoids the society of any one whomsoever; for this gives one the character of being proud, high, severe, arrogant, censorious, ambitious, and excessive in the expression of these feelings. In society, he resolves to be very careful not to appear as the "great ally" of any one (*ne cum aliquo socium agam*), not even with his most intimate friends, if any chance to be present; for this would smack of levity to those who observe it. He will not allow himself in any impropriety of speech or action, lest, by too ready familiarity, he get the character of being impertinent. Above all, he resolves to avoid saying biting, pungent

or sarcastic things against people; for it is mere stupidity to think we can laugh at people who have no reason for bearing with us, and yet not incur their hatred. He resolves to pay every one the honour due to him, to observe modesty, to speak little and well, that the company may retire rather with a desire to have more of his society than fatigued with it. If the meeting is but momentary, and he has hardly time to say more than "How do you do?" (*quamvis a salutatione non aliud dicerem*), he will do so in a liberal, polite, and well-regulated manner, neither austere nor gloomy.

3. Then, as to his intimate friends, these shall be *few, good, and honourable* (because it is extremely difficult to succeed with many, or to avoid being corrupted by associating with the bad, or to be honoured except by the honourable). The grand precept he resolves to observe, both as to general society and intimate friendship, is this: *Amicus omnibus, familiaris paucis*. Judgment and prudence is every where needed. There is no rule without an exception, but that one rule which is the foundation of all the rest: *Nihil contra Deum*. With his intimate friends he resolves to be modest without impertinence, easy without austerity, sweet without affectation, pliable without contradiction (unless there be good reason for it), and cordial without dissimulation (because men like to know those with whom they act). But he will open himself more or less to different friends, according to the degree of intimacy which exists between them. "There are melancholy persons, who are delighted when any one reveals to them his defects; but from such characters one ought rather to hide oneself; for their imagination being strong, they will philosophise for ten years or more on the most trifling imperfection. Further, why reveal imperfections? are they not visible enough of themselves? By no means, therefore, is it expedient to make them manifest; but it is good to confess them." He thus regulates his demeanour with regard to these three classes, the impertinent, the liberal or gentlemanly, and the

melancholy: "To the impertinent I will absolutely hide myself. To the liberal, if only they fear God, I will absolutely reveal myself, and speak to them with an open heart. To the melancholy I will merely show myself, as the proverb has it, *ex fenestra*, from behind the lattice; that is, I will partly open myself to them (because such people have a great curiosity to see into the hearts of men, and where they see one too much restrained, they are suddenly suspicious); and I will partly conceal myself (because such persons are accustomed too closely to watch and philosophise on the characters of those who associate with them)."

4. As he finds himself, for the most part, obliged to meet persons of very various ranks, he wishes to adjust his manners accordingly. To his superiors in age, profession, or authority, he resolves to show an exquisitely polished demeanour (*nonnisi exquisitum ostendendum est*); to his equals, good manners; and a certain indifference towards his inferiors. The reason he gives for this distinction is, that great and wise persons are fond of that exquisite polish which he resolves to use towards the first class, whilst the second would only think it affectation, and the third a disagreeable gravity. If he finds himself brought into intimate friendship with the great, he will then be particularly anxious (for the may be compared to fire, a good thing to approach sometimes, but not to approach too nearly). Therefore, in their presence, he will show great modesty, tempered with an honourable freedom (because the great like to be loved and to be respected; and love causes freedom, and modesty respect). It is therefore good to use a little freedom in the society of the great, but not so as to omit respect; and the respect must be greater than the freedom. Amongst equals, freedom and respect must be equal; towards inferiors, freedom must be greater than respect; but the contrary must be observed with great and superior persons.

Such were the wise maxims which this youth of eighteen or twenty laid down for his conduct in the

world. Not greater insight into the human heart is displayed in an essay of Lord Bacon's, or a chapter of the rhetoric of Aristotle; not more refined or subtle appreciation of society is to be found in Chesterfield or La Bruyère. People are too apt to imagine that this acuteness and polish cannot be conjoined with devotion or simplicity. They should study the character of Francis, who in these resolutions shows how completely the true Catholic, nay even the heroic and saintly devotee, may more than rival the courtier and the statesman in good breeding and the most finished politeness. These maxims of Francis de Sales became known to his friends in the university, and they obtained copies of them, in order to guide their own manners on the pattern of his.

Whilst at Padua, he was attacked with a violent fever, which brought him to the brink of the grave, throughout which illness he showed the most heroic resignation. One very singular instance is recorded of his charity on this occasion. When asked by his tutor what were his wishes with regard to his funeral, he replied, that he had only one request to make, which was, that his body might be given to the medical students for dissection. When the Abbé Déage exclaimed in horror at this proposal, the holy youth replied, that he would feel it a great consolation to think that, having been so useless during life, he should at least be of some service after he was dead, by supplying the medical students with a subject not purchased at the cost of quarrels and murder. The fact was, that in the University of Padua the most terrible scenes used to occur in consequence of this difficulty. The medical students, in their eagerness to obtain subjects for dissection, used to rifle the churchyards; the townsmen rushed, with arms in their hands, to prevent this, and sanguinary conflicts and the bitterest feelings were the results. There was, therefore, real wisdom in this proposal, which at first might have been thought the mere extravagance of delirium. He was perfectly serious in it; and the sacrifice would

probably have done much to bring about some better regulation: however, it was not needed; for he soon after recovered, almost miraculously, at the moment when he was thought to be in the very agonies of death. He completed his education at Padua with extraordinary distinction; and the ceremony of conferring on him the degree of doctor of laws was celebrated with the most unusual pomp, and in a manner which showed that he was looked upon as the very brightest ornament of the university. It took place on September 5, 1591, when Francis was twenty-four years of age. Forty-eight doctors assembled on the occasion; and Pancirolus presided and conducted the examination. The candidate answered in the most brilliant manner; after which Pancirolus addressed him in a speech, in which he complimented him in the highest terms on his admirable career, alluding not only to his learning, but to the astonishing example of purity, goodness, and charity which he had afforded to the university. In the midst of a luxurious city he had preserved himself unstained; like the fountain of Arethusa in the old Grecian fable, which mingled its waters with the sea without contracting aught of their bitterness. Francis de Sales replied in an elegant oration, in which, after alluding to the benefits he had derived from his studies in the University of Paris,—where, he said, “the very roofs and walls seemed to speak philosophy,”—he expressed his deep sense of the obligation he was under to the University of Padua for the legal wisdom which its schools afforded, mentioning three professors to whom he was in particular indebted, Pancirolus, Menochius, and Matheaeus. He concluded by rendering thanks to Jesus Christ, to our Blessed Lady, to his angel-guardian, and to his holy patron, St. Francis of Assisi,—*cujus nomine* (said he) *vocari plurimum delector*. He then received from Pancirolus the doctor's cap and ring, amidst the applauses of all present; and was conducted to his house by the entire assembly, the city itself rejoicing as he passed by. The effect which his character,

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even at ~~an~~ very early age, produced upon all who met him, is one of the most singular proofs of his greatness. We read that there was such a charm about his appearance, something so sweet and noble, that people used to watch in the street for an opportunity to see him as he passed by. The greatest things were expected from him even at the very earliest stage of his career.

He quitted Padua towards the end of the year; and, previous to returning home, he made the pilgrimage to Rome and Loretto, visiting also Venice, Milan, and other cities of particular interest in the north of Italy. At Rome he fed his devotion with continual visits to the various sanctuaries and relics of primitive antiquity. A long list is given by his earliest biographer of the churches and other places which he visited with most devotion. These were the Coliseum, and the churches of SS. Peter and Paul, St. Mary Major's, Santa Croce, and SS. Sebastian and Laurence, every where honouring the holy relics which were preserved in these places respectively. He also thoroughly inspected all the remains of Roman grandeur in the Eternal City; the chief impression he derived from which was, the transitoriness and emptiness of earthly greatness, and its intrinsic weakness as opposed to the dominion of the Church which has overthrown it. Whilst at Rome he had a remarkable escape: he had been obliged to leave the lodgings he had taken, in consequence of the arrival of some noblemen of high rank, to whom the landlord was tempted to give the preference; the very next night, the house and all who were in it were swept away by a sudden inundation of the Tiber. At Loretto his devotion was extraordinary; and the Abbé Déage, who saw him whilst he was praying in the Holy House, was so struck with his demeanour and appearance, that ever after he regarded him with a degree of reverence which approached to veneration: his face appeared actually inflamed, and to dart out rays of light like a star. The same phenomenon appears more than once in his subsequent history. From Loretto he went to Ancona, where

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES.

he found a vessel about to sail for Venice. A Neapolitan lady and her suite had engaged it; but the master of the ship was willing also to take Francis and his party. When the lady knew of this, she, in a passionate manner, forbade the ship-master to take these additional passengers. Francis remonstrated with his usual high-bred courtesy, but in vain; the lady obliged the captain to set sail without them. Strange to say, before the ship had proceeded very far, and while Francis was yet watching it, one of those sudden squalls common in the Mediterranean came on; the ship was engulfed, and every soul on board perished. Francis took the next opportunity to sail for Cattolica, a little town between Ancona and Venice. On this voyage he himself had a very narrow escape from shipwreck, but arrived safely at Cattolica, and from thence proceeded to Venice, where he remained some time. This completed his travels. He returned homewards, passing by Pavia, Milan, Turin, and arriving at his father's chateau of La Thuille in the spring of the year 1592.

CHAPTER II

HIS VOCATION TO THE ECCLESIASTICAL STATE—FOUNDATION OF THE CONFRATERNITY OF THE HOLY CROSS.

FRANCIS DE SALES WAS NOW twenty-five years old, and perhaps one of the most finished gentlemen and learned jurists of his age, as most certainly in holiness he was surpassed by no one. By his father's order he now took the title of Seigneur de Villaroget, this being one of the lordships in the possession of the family; the title of which, as was customary at the time, was borne by the eldest son. He took an early opportunity, after his return, to call upon the venerable Bishop of Geneva, Claude de Granier,—a visit which coloured the whole of his subsequent career; leading, as it did, first to his being nominated to the office of provost of the cathedral chapter of Geneva, next to that of coadjutor to the bishop, and finally to his own elevation to the see of Geneva. The aged prelate received him with the utmost distinction. He had from the very first a presentiment, which he did not hesitate to express to his clergy, that this young nobleman would live to be his successor in the episcopate. The idea even haunted his dreams; and the old man saw, in prophetic vision, the career of the future saint prefigured by mysterious emblems. He imagined he saw him engaged in the chase in the mountains of Savoy, slaughtering the wolves, bears, and other fierce animals, which furnished but too faithful a type of the heresies which devastated the flock intrusted to his care. He made the youthful Francis, though habited in his laical dress, and girt with the sword, which indicated his rank in the world, assist at an assembly of theologians; and made him express his opinion on a difficult point which had embarrassed all the disputants, and which he solved with

that lucid clearness which was such a characteristic of his mind.

Though the vocation of Francis to the priesthood was thus becoming more and more marked every day, his father was still bent upon carving out for him a widely different career. M. de Boisy insisted upon his proceeding to the bar; and Francis did not consider it his duty to resist. He was appointed advocate in the supreme court or senate of Savoy, on November 24, 1592. The nomination was accompanied with circumstances of extraordinary distinction: the highest honours in the state seemed opened before him; and he contracted with the most illustrious and learned member of that profession in Savoy, Antoine Favre, a friendship so intimate, that they called each other by the name of brother.

Francis had only been called to the bar a very short time, when a singular incident occurred, in which he discerned the indication of the will of God leading him to a different path. In travelling with the old priest, his preceptor, through the forest of Sonaz, near Annecy, his horse thrice stumbled, and threw him, gallant cavalier as he was, on the ground. He noticed, each time on rising, that his sword had fallen out of the scabbard, and the scabbard from off his baldrick; and that all three times the sword and the scabbard had formed an exact cross on the ground. Francis, though the least superstitious of mankind, was much struck by the circumstance, which, trifling as it was, seemed to have a divine significance, when his thoughts were already so strongly setting in the direction of the sacred ministry. He decided on entering the ecclesiastical state; but did not immediately confide his resolution to his father, preferring to wait till Divine Providence afforded him some favourable opportunity. Such an occasion very soon afterwards occurred. M. de Boisy believed that he had secured a most favourable match for the youthful advocate. Mademoiselle de Vegy, the lady on whom he fixed his choice, belonged to one of

the noblest families in Savoy, was wealthy, and in every way likely to have promoted his son's worldly happiness. Francis seized the opportunity to declare to his father the fixed purpose which he had formed of becoming a priest. The kind-hearted but somewhat ambitious old noble was deeply grieved at this resolution. Whilst he was vainly endeavouring to combat it, another circumstance arose which added to the painfulness of the sacrifice M. de Boisy was now called upon to make, as it showed very clearly that he was by no means mistaken in the lofty estimate he had formed of his son's prospects of success. The court of Savoy offered, and even pressed upon the young lord of Villaroget to accept the office of senator in the court of Chambéry. It was the highest distinction in the power of the government to give, and such as a man of the world could not have sacrificed for his son without acute mortification. The friends of Francis sought to soften the blow to M. de Boisy by obtaining for his son the ecclesiastical office of provost of the cathedral church of Geneva. This Francis accepted in the month of May 1593, and expressed to his father finally that his mind was made up. A scene ensued which was exquisitely distressing to flesh and blood. M. de Boisy was completely overcome, but at last reconciled himself generously to the will of Almighty God, and gave his unreserved blessing to his son upon entering his new career. However overwhelming the sacrifice might be at the time, it was soon made up to him a thousandfold; and the public joy with which the whole city of Annecy received it was a type of the gladness which the episcopate of Francis de Sales was destined to diffuse over the whole Church.

He received the minor orders on June 8th, 1593; and four days after, on the eve of Trinity Sunday, he was raised to be sub-deacon; on the 18th of December of the same year he was raised to the dignity of the priesthood. From the very first he commenced a most active missionary life; and his biography at this period of

his life is interesting in a particular manner, as affording valuable details of a confraternity which he founded throughout the diocese of Geneva. He relied very much on the advantages of these institutions, as enabling, by the force of combination, the weak to resist temptation, and affording to all the means of making rapid progress in grace. The association which he founded was called the "Confraternity of Penitents of the Holy Cross, of the Immaculate Conception, and of the Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul." The idea of it was, that the members should do continual penance for their own sins and for those of others; and as they were living in a heretic country where the Holy Cross was continually outraged, it was to be an especial devotion with them to repair these insults by their adoration and love. The selection of the title of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin is one of the many instances of the far-reaching character of Francis's views. Every Catholic has heard of the immense tide of miraculous graces and favours which has attended in our own times the establishment of a confraternity under the same invocation. The principal rules of the new Confraternity of the Holy Cross were the following. The members were to communicate on the Feasts of the Invention and of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, of the Conception of the B.V., of the Apostles SS. Peter and Paul, and on the second Sunday of every month. On these festivals the Blessed Sacrament was to be exposed all day; and there were always to be two brethren engaged in adoration for the space of an hour for certain special objects, among which were the preservation of the Faith and the conversion of heretics. Thus we see that he in some measure anticipated the idea of the Confraternities of Perpetual Adoration. We find also, in the rules which he established, traces of another devotion now greatly favoured in the Church. Once a day they were to recite five *Paters* and five *Aves* in honour of the five wounds of our Lord, kneeling and with head uncovered,

wherever they happened to be, even in the streets or public places. Then, on the festivals we have mentioned there was to be a public procession of the brethren, chanting prayers or reciting the chaplet. The visiting of the sick, and the accompanying of the Blessed Sacrament when it was brought to them, the reconciliation of such of the brethren as were at variance or at law with each other,—were among the active works of mercy they were enjoined to perform. We see in the general spirit which pervades these rules, that practical, and at the same time that tender and considerate character, by which all the institutions and views of Francis were penetrated. No austerities are appointed, nothing that need alarm even the most sickly and infirm; but a considerable sacrifice of human respect, the practice of the works of mercy, and the habitual use of certain devotions, which long experience has shown to be the most calculated to advance souls a long way in a short time. His cheerful and kindly spirit is beautifully displayed in the history of a pilgrimage which he and his confraternity made to Aix in Savoy, where a relic of the true Cross had for ages attracted the devotion of the faithful. Never was the value of this holy practice of pilgrimages more strikingly shown than on this occasion: in the joy with which all the devout penitents joined in the journey, singing litanies as they went; in the order which the wise director established throughout; and in the hospitality afforded them by a holy and religious nobleman, the Baron de Cusey. It was a fair and lovely picture of the antique Catholic life, which in our own days, at places like Fouvières and La Salette, has been restored with such advantage and edification to the faithful.

It is scarcely necessary to say that Francis applied himself with extraordinary diligence to all the duties of the secular priest, ministering to the destitute, preaching, and hearing confessions incessantly. We shall in a later portion of this volume endeavour to characterize him in these capacities; in this place we shall

only mention an amusing anecdote, in which the old nobleman, his father, expressed his opinion of the modern style of preaching, which Francis de Sales was among the first to introduce. Francis himself, many years after, said to the Bishop of Belley: "I had the best father in the world; but he had passed a great part of his life at court and in military service, the maxims of which he knew better than theology. Whilst I was provost, I preached on every occasion, as well in the cathedral as in the parish-churches, and even in the humblest confraternities. I knew not how to refuse, so dear to me was that word of our Lord's, *Omni petenti d te tribus*—give to every one that asketh thee (Luke vi. 30). My good father, hearing the bell ring for the sermon, asked who preached; they said to him, Who should it be but your son? One day he took me aside, and said to me: 'Provost, you preach too often; I hear even on working-days the bell ring for the sermon; and they always say to me, It is the provost, the provost. In my time it was not so; predications were much more rare; but also, what predications they were! God knows they were learned, well studied; they spoke marvels; they quoted more Latin and Greek in one of them than you do in ten; every body was delighted and edified with them; they ran to them in crowds; you would have said they were going to gather manna. Now-a-days you make this exercise so common, that nobody regards it, and they set no value on you.' Do you see (remarked Francis), this good father spoke as he understood, and with all freedom; he spoke according to the maxims of the world in which he had been brought up: but the evangelical maxims are altogether of another stamp; Jesus Christ, the mirror of perfection and the model of preachers, did not use all these circumspections, any more than the Apostles who followed His steps. Believe me, people can never preach enough: *nunquam satis dicitur quod nunquam satis discitur*; above all, now-a-days and in the neighbourhood of heresy, which

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only maintains itself by the *prêches*, and will never be conquered but by preaching." His conduct as a confessor was such as could only be expressed by metaphors drawn from the tenderness of a mother or the watchfulness of an angel-guardian. With regard to the whole office of the priesthood, he had formed, in his retreat preparatory to ordination, three resolutions by which he governed himself. One was, to make all his actions a continual preparation for the sacrifice of the altar; so that if at any moment he was asked what he was about, he might say with truth, "I am preparing to say Mass." His second resolution was, never to ascend the altar except in the same frame of mind he would have had if he were about to die. And the third, to unite himself in every thing to Jesus Christ, by the thought of His love and the imitation of His example. So great a soul as that of Francis de Sales, acting upon maxims like these, could not but immediately produce the noblest fruits of edification; and a ministry like his would be worthy of remembrance, had it lasted but a week, and been limited to the quiet scenes of the old Catholic provincial capital where he lived. But he had scarcely laboured there half a year, before he was summoned to a wider sphere, where he earned even the rare appellation of apostle.

CHAPTER III.

HIS MISSION IN THE CHABLAIS—ITS EARLY DIFFICULTIES.

ONE could scarcely imagine a more interesting study for the Catholic missionary of the present day, placed amidst vast masses of population alien to the faith, than that which is afforded by Francis de Sales' mission to the districts on the Lake of Geneva, belonging at that time partly to the house of Savoy, partly to France. These districts were the duchy of Chablais, and the bailiwicks of Gex, Ternier, and Gaillard. After the restless citizens of Geneva had thrown off the yoke both of their Prince-bishop and of his lay rival the Duke of Savoy, the possession of these provinces, lying along the borders of their lake, and almost within view of their city, became naturally an object of their anxious ambition, and almost necessary to their political existence. The war between Francis I. and Emmanuel-Philibert of Savoy supplied them with an opportunity of seizing on the coveted possessions; and the Catholic religion was rooted up in them with all that sacrilegious fury which characterised the pretended Reformation every where. Churches were desecrated, abbeys demolished, crosses overthrown; and a feeble remnant of Catholics alone remained in what had but lately been a fine and richly-adorned portion of the Lord's vineyard. The provinces were, indeed, again surrendered by the Swiss to the Duke of Savoy when peace was concluded between Henry II. of France and Emmanuel-Philibert; but the treaty expressly guaranteed that the Catholic religion should not be re-established. The religious conquest, therefore, survived, though the political dominion changed; and so matters went on, till, in the reign of Charles-Emmanuel, the son of the last-mentioned prince, the Genevese seized the provinces for

the second time. This usurpation ended most fortunately for Catholicity; since Divine Providence occasioned by that event the wonderful mission by which Francis de Sales brought back those thickly-peopled and beautiful regions to the Catholic faith. Charles-Emmanuel very speedily reduced them to subjection; and then, as he justly considered their revolt had released him from the obligations of the treaty by which they were originally restored to his father, he determined on effecting the re-establishment of the Catholic religion throughout those districts. Had he even used compulsion to make his subjects renew their allegiance to the faith as well as to the government from which they had revolted, Protestants at least would have had no right to complain; since the so-called Reformation was undeniably carried by violence and rapine, and stood towards the sovereigns of Europe precisely as Socialism, its logical development, does at present. But, with that moderation and prudence which characterised for many generations the house of Savoy, Charles-Emmanuel resolved to adopt the method of gentleness rather than that of force; and if he used the steel gauntlet, to swathe it in velvet. He accordingly desired the Bishop of Geneva to select a certain number of ecclesiastics of edifying life and adequate learning, to be sent as missionaries into the reconquered provinces. The bishop accordingly sent to Thonon a worthy and zealous priest named Bouchut, who encountered such difficulties on the part of the rude and intractable population, that he remained but a short time, and returned quite in despair of effecting any thing under existing circumstances. Upon this the bishop, after some delay, called together an assembly of his clergy in the cathedral of Annecy, and asked their advice and assistance. His harangue, although recommended by his gentle piety and venerable old age, seemed likely to fail of response. The clergy remained in mournful silence; much like the Israelites of old, terrified by the imagination of the dangers which beset their entrance

into the promised land. A more discouraging prospect, indeed, it would have been difficult for them to have pictured to their minds. A population which for sixty years had been alienated from the faith; among whom Calvinism was regularly established; close to Geneva, the very head-quarters, "the Rome of heresy," as Francis calls it, and identifying its profession of heresy with the political independence of which it had just been deprived. Every thing seemed against success; and the clergy might have thought that had St. John the Baptist risen from the dead, he had better have turned his supernatural energy to any undertaking for the glory of God rather than to this. One man there was in that assembly, the youthful provost of Geneva, who gave way to no such discouragements. Francis de Sales felt his whole soul enkindle at the prospect from which the others shrank, and offered to lead the enterprise himself: he advised that the bishop should remain at home to help them, like another Moses, by his prayers, and enter on the field only when the harvest was ready to be reaped; for himself, he asked for no assistants at present but his cousin Louis de Sales.

The bishop gladly granted his request. Others seem to have considered it a Quixotic sort of enterprise; and Francis had to resist not only the advice and commands of his father, but the anguish which he vehemently expressed on seeing his son engaged in what he believed an imprudent, and perhaps even alarming enterprise, in which his life might at any moment be sacrificed to the fury of an heretical mob. Even to those of his friends who did not view the matter in this light, one can easily imagine how the highly-born ecclesiastic must have seemed to be "throwing himself away" in going to evangelise the narrow-minded magistrates and uncultivated population of a country-town and its vicinity; among whom, as the result showed, M. de Boisys was quite right in anticipating his son's life might be endangered. Notwithstanding all opposition, however, Francis and Louis de Sales, on Sept

9th, 1594, set out from Annecy, and proceeded first to the chateau of Sales, which lay in their road. Here they spent a few days, during which they had to encounter the constant remonstrances of M. de Boisy. In spite of all this vexatious opposition, they made full preparations for their great undertaking by fasting, prayer, mortifications, and a general confession. On the evening of Sept. 13th, Francis bade farewell to his mother, who, unlike his father, said nothing to discourage her son from his heroic mission. They spent a large part of the night in prayer in the castle chapel, and started early on their march next morning, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. They travelled on foot, in apostolic fashion, unencumbered with any luggage that could be spared, and carrying no books but the Breviary, the Bible, and Bellarmine's *Controversies*. Francis de Sales was dressed in somewhat secular attire, wearing his hair short, and his beard thick and bushy, in the fashion of the day. He found this gave him access where a more ecclesiastical garb would have alarmed people; and he was not a man to sacrifice winning souls to the Church for any feeling on matters not of vital importance. They arrived at Allinges, a fortress on the frontiers of the Chablais, by which the Duke of Savoy kept the whole duchy in submission. It was commanded by a brave captain, the Baron d'Hermance, an old friend of the house of Sales, who received the chivalrous missionaries with great kindness, in obedience both to the orders of the Duke of Savoy, and from a regard for M. de Boisy. He led his guests to the platform of the castle, and showed them the scene of their future labours. On every side of the beautiful landscape the Reformation had left traces of its baleful course over regions which were then fresh from the hands of the spoiler. Churches in ruins, crosses overturned, castles and villages laid waste,—such were the dreary tokens of the sway of the enemy whom Francis was setting out to combat. At the distance of three hundred years, the delicate finger of time has invested

monastic ruins with a sort of sentimental charm, at least to minds which look only at the exterior. No such charm could possibly have existed in 1594, when persons were still living who could recollect the time when those fair abbeys had resounded with the praises of the Lord, and the kneeling faithful worshipped at those crosses. The ruins were but the raw and bleeding wounds of the Spouse of Christ. Francis could not restrain his tears at the sight, and broke out into some of those mournful exclamations with which the ancient prophets bewailed the ruins of the holy city.

They then debated on the plan of action to be pursued. The baron drew a discouraging picture of the population Francis de Sales was undertaking to convert. They were good sort of people on the whole, but stupid and slow; of the class into whose head it is equally hard to get an idea conveyed, or, once conveyed, to drive it out again: their whole temporal interests too were involved, or they supposed them to be so, in keeping good friends with their neighbours of Geneva; and they regarded their liberties as co-existent with the exercise of the Calvinist religion. The baron recommended the missionaries to go warily to work, and with the utmost caution. He gave them letters to the magistrates of the town; and the two missionaries went forward on their arduous mission, unaccompanied by any escort. He said that they could not safely sleep in the town, but must return every night to the castle; that, for the present, they ought not to attempt more than preaching at Thonon, for it would be useless to say Mass there; and he recommended them to say it either in the castle chapel, or at Marin, a place still Catholic, on the other side of the river Drance, or in an old chapel of the monks of St. Bernard on the borders of the lake.

On arriving at Thonon, they found, on inquiry, that there were but seven Catholic families in the place, amounting to not more than fourteen or fifteen souls. They assembled them together, and Francis addressed

them with holy exhortations, announcing himself as their pastor; and inviting them in future to assemble at the church of St. Hippolytus, which had been declared common for the service of both religions. They then presented their letters to the magistrates, and in the evening returned to Allinges. They returned next day, and so continued; preaching daily either in the town or the neighbouring villages, whither they went always on foot, and staff in hand, like the disciples of our Lord. It does not appear that at first they had to contend with more than complete indifference on the part of the Protestant inhabitants of Thonon. It was, indeed, reported that the ministers of Geneva were clamouring to have the missionaries whipped out of the town; but it is not likely any thing of the kind would have been thought of by the people of Thonon, with the castle of Allinges at the distance of only six miles. On several occasions, however, it is certain that Francis was in imminent danger of assassination. On Jan. 8 1595, a fanatic (who afterwards was converted to the faith) made three unsuccessful attempts to shoot him and afterwards posted other assassins in various places to intercept him, from whose hands he miraculously escaped. Similar attempts we shall have to record further on.

At present, and long afterwards, the holy missionaries had much anxiety for want of money. M. de Boisy, angry at what he considered his son's pertinacity in going on with the mission, would not assist them; and it was only by stealth Madame de Boisy could send them supplies. Francis thought of learning a trade, like St. Paul, but goodhumouredly said he was too dull to make any thing, except mend his clothes a little. Of the isolation in which they lived, Francis gives us an idea, by playfully comparing a Catholic lady of Thonon, connected with his own family, to Rahab, except so far as regarded her character. Like Rahab, she sheltered the spies of the people of the Lord in the midst of a whole city full of enemies.

They made little progress in gaining the ear of the people by their sermons. In a letter written in the spring of 1595, after he had been for seven months residing in Thonon itself, he says that he had preached generally every festival, and very often on week-days, but only three or four Huguenots on four or five occasions had attended his sermons; that it was wonderful to see the hold which temporal interest had on their minds,—an evil which seemed to admit of no remedy; for talk to them of hell, and they sheltered themselves under the mercy of God; and if further pressed, took themselves off at once. In short, they were cold, timid and immutabile. Notwithstanding all this, while at Aliinges he walked regularly every day to Thonon and back again, two long leagues, in the severest weather, just as punctually as if he had the most flourishing mission on his hands that ever rewarded the toils of a Catholic priest. If we might be allowed to illustrate religion from politics, and to compare individuals the most dissimilar it is possible to imagine, we are reminded of O'Connell's persisting in holding his meetings; gravely moving and seconding resolutions, and having reports drawn up for the papers, when only two or three stragglers were present. He knew well enough that he had resources in himself, and that a party would be sure to grow with his energy and perseverance. So he surveyed the half-empty hall with the utmost cheerfulness, till in a few years he was able to cover whole miles of the country with multitudes from every quarter.

The method of controversy adopted by Francis de Sales rested on a few principles which, in these days, it is well to recal. One was, to avoid all abusive terms of the heretics or their doctrine. To use his own metaphor, he concealed the lancet in wool, and inflicted the salutary wound almost before the application of the instrument was felt. Another was, that he persuaded those with whom he discussed to admit this very reasonable preliminary,—that the debate should turn, not

on things they themselves allowed to be indifferent, or only on points really essential; and such as alone could justify their separation from the Catholic Church, supposing their view to be right. He further demanded two other conditions, which were equally fair, viz. that they should not accuse Catholics for supposed consequences from doctrines, when these consequences were disavowed by the Catholics themselves; and lastly, that the authorities referred to for Catholic doctrine should not be any private authors, but simply the recognised text-books of the Catholic Church herself, the Catechism and other formularies of the Council of Trent. No Protestant would venture to refuse these conditions, if he cared to profess himself a fair disputant, or seriously intended a controversy for the sake of arriving at truth. He not only preached and conversed incessantly, but wrote at every spare moment he could find, and caused his papers to be distributed every week among families, or posted up in the streets in the form of placards. These papers he never lived to publish in a collected form; though he intended to have based on them a work on "the method of converting heretics by holy preaching." Writing to his friend the Archbishop of Vienne, on this design, he observes: "I would employ in it several meditations made during five years in the Chablais, where I preached without other books than the Bible and those of the great Bellarmine." The Mss. were lost sight of for a long time after his death, but were discovered, in 1658, by Charles Auguste de Sales, in an old deal box in the château of La Thuille, and were edited under the title of *Controverses de S. François de Sales*. They are divided into four parts, treating respectively of missions, of the rule of faith, of the Sacraments, and of purgatory; and though they have only reached us in an imperfect form, furnish a most interesting study to the popular controversialist. They are often characterised by a certain archness, which is amusing, and which belongs to the national temperament of Savoy. On his knowledge of

their temperament, and consequent sympathy with the people among whom he laboured, Francis appears to have relied much. He twice alludes to it in the preface to the *Controverses*. "Its method and style," he remarks, "will not displease you, for it is altogether Savoyard;" and again, very beautifully, "Although you may have seen several books better made and better adorned, let your attention rest a little on this, which will, perhaps, be more agreeable to your humour than the others: for it is altogether Savoyard; and one of the most salutary receipts and latest remedies is *the return to one's native air*."

Still, with all his gentleness, he knew the importance of using at times a little parade and display of the strength of the Catholic argument. Thus, at a later period of his mission, when the ministers flinched from meeting him in controversy, he writes to Favre: "I promised that in my next sermon I would demonstrate the dogma from the Scriptures more clearly than the light of noon-day; and would maintain it with such a weight of reasoning, that not one of my opponents shall be ignorant that he has been blinded by the thickest darkness, unless he has bid farewell to humanity and reason. They rightly perceive that by these rhodomontade propositions they and their understandings are challenged to the combat, at the risk, if they do not come, of being thought utter cowards for dreading the onset of any Catholic, of however small account." But we are anticipating triumphs, of which there was for many a weary month no visible indication. Francis kept making his daily pilgrimages to Thonon, notwithstanding great suffering from the cold of an Alpine winter. Remarkable occurrences are recorded, which showed his fortitude and trust in Divine Providence. On one occasion, when the missionaries had delayed their departure from the little town till near nightfall, they lost their way in returning to Allinges, and were denied admittance at every door of a Protestant village through which they passed,—the people

having a superstitious dread of them infused into their minds by the ministers, who gave out that the Catholic missionaries were sorcerers, and had dealings with the devil. They only escaped being in all probability frozen to death, by fortunately finding shelter in the village bakehouse, the oven of which was still warm. On another occasion, just as they were going out of the gates, a Huguenot, who had been struck with the contrast between the apostolic patience and gentleness of Francis, and the conduct of the ministers of his own sect, entreated to have a talk with him. Francis could not refuse, though there awaited him the dangerous journey through the forest to be traversed by night. The result of the conversation is not known; but the biographers of the Saint give a most picturesque description of his return by night to Allinges, accompanied only by his cousin and a servant. They lose their way in the thick darkness; the howling of wolves and bears is heard all around; the travellers at length, the moon breaking forth, see a large ruined building at a distance, which proves to be one of the many ancient churches which the Calvinists had overthrown. The missionaries take refuge in it; and whilst his companions slept, Francis, like another Jeremias, poured forth his lamentations on the desecrated temple. What makes one more admire this heroic endurance is, that he had at the same time so hard a fight with the opposition of friends. His father used all his entreaties and authority to make Francis resign what he considered a hopeless and dangerous undertaking, in which at best he was throwing himself away; and for a moment he even induced the Bishop of Geneva to consent to recal him. Antoine Favre visited Thonon to see how he got on; and on his return writes a letter, in which he hints to Francis that, notwithstanding the extraordinary admiration entertained for his character, there was a general notion he was casting pearls before swine. About this time Francis wrote a noble letter to Favre, in which, after telling him that the leading citizens, not trusting their

individual resolution to avoid him, had bound themselves by a mutual engagement never to hear Catholic sermons, he adds, "I believe I see the object of these wretched men; they want in a manner to compel us to go away, by destroying all hope of doing any thing: but we, on the other hand, so long as the treaty and the will of the ecclesiastical and secular princes shall permit, have wholly and most resolutely determined to apply to the work, to leave not a stone unturned, to entreat, to rebuke, in all the patience and devotion God has given us. But in my opinion, if we are to fight in this arena, we must have, not preaching only, but the sacrifice of the Mass as soon as possible, that the enemy may feel that he is not so much abating as increasing our courage by his arts; but I see that great prudence is required in that matter."

CHAPTER IV.

GRADUAL CHANGE IN THE STATE OF AFFAIRS, AND FINAL
CONVERSION OF THE CHARLAIN.

MANY months passed with as little encouragement as ever. At length a turn took place in the state of affairs; and at first, as often happens, in an indirect manner. The garrison at Allinges had been remarkable for its excesses, especially in blasphemy, drunkenness, and duelling. Francis made the reformation of these poor soldiers his by-work in the midst of his grand undertaking of Thonon. Allinges, as we have seen, was his headquarters, whither at first he returned every night after the labours of the day among the thankless citizens. Tired out as he might be with preaching, arguing, and walking so many miles, in all weathers, over mountain-roads and through forests, he still heard the confessions of the soldiers; and gained such an ascendancy over them, that the whole garrison became changed, and instead of being the terror of the surrounding districts, was now its wonder and edification. A beautiful story is told of his method of dealing with these rugged hearts. One of the soldiers, who had been touched by a sermon of the apostolic missionary, came and made his confession to him in agonies of remorse. All the penance Francis gave him was an "Our Father" and a "Hail Mary." The penitent expressed his amazement at what seemed to him extreme indulgence. Francis in reply bade him trust in the mercy of God, which was greater than all his iniquities, and said that he would bind himself with the surplus of his penance. The soldier was so struck by this angelic charity, that a few weeks after he entered religion and became a Carthusian. We know of no more instructive instance of what all must often have felt, viz. the extraordinary generosity of the Catholic

Church. In her there are no upbraidings. The sinner does penance, and the Precious Blood washes away his sins; the simplicity of the satisfaction leaving the soul in a kind of tranquil amazement, and deeply imbued with the feeling that to sin again, when forgiveness has been accorded with such lavish, such infinite love, would add to the stain of sin an element of new and stupendous ingratitude. To return, however, to our chief subject. The change wrought by Francis on the garrison of Allinges, of course, was not long in producing its effect on the hearts of the people of Thonon; and though, even after this, Francis still had his patience tried for many months, from that time might be dated a new epoch in his mission.

The next advantage gained was the conversion of an aged gentleman in the neighbourhood, whom Francis prevented fighting a duel, and in whom he effected a thorough alteration, not only of his mode of life, but of his whole character. This gentleman's house became sort of rendezvous for those who wished to hear about the Catholic religion; and there Francis held regular conferences, which soon began to have powerful effect. He had a particular gift in winning people by conversation, in which his persuasiveness arose, first, from that real sweetness and kindness of heart, which may be said to be almost irresistible; and secondly, from an absence of any thing like *empressement*; that is, he would never be over hasty or eager, always be ready patiently to hear what people had to say, and quietly to wait the proper opportunity for saying in his turn what was fitting; and finally, he would never pursue an advantage too far, but knew how to leave off just at the right moment. A man who had unrivalled charity, humility, and confidence in God, would naturally show those characteristics in conversation.

The gentleness of his method of conducting controversy, and the unexpected manner in which he brought out strongly principles which the Calvinists thought peculiarly their own property, caused great surprise;

even as in our day Protestants are astonished to find Thomas à Kempis or Rodriguez so "evangelical." How could one, brought up in "the darkness of popery," nay more, who was moving heaven and earth to bring that supposed darkness again upon the Chablais, speak so beautifully of the mediation of Christ? Some tried to explain this, however, by supposing that Francis had improved his views by being so much with the Calvinists; and others contended that he was disguising the real tenets of the Catholic Church. Francis put out a pamphlet on the subject of the conferences, in which was shown that what he taught was simply the doctrine of the Catechism of the Council of Trent, and that no one would argue that the Council did not know what Catholic theology was. He concluded by challenging the ministers to a disputation either by writing or in public discussion. They shrank, however, from accepting the challenge, and did not venture a reply to his pamphlet. The fear with which he inspired them was made apparent soon after by a conspiracy to assassinate the gentleman at whose house the conferences were held. His presence of mind and his generosity, however, were such, that the matter only ended in the conversion of the man who had intended to take his life; the Catholic movement again took a fresh impulse; and people came in crowds to hear Francis de Sales, in spite of the rage and the prohibitions of their ministers. They now plotted to take the life of Francis himself; and on July 18th, 1595, two assassins actually waylaid him in the forest, as he was returning as usual to Allinges, with a very few companions. Francis behaved like our Lord, when St. Peter drew his sword to defend Him against the band of soldiers headed by the traitor. He forbade his attendants to use their weapons; and advancing towards the assassins, he said, "My friends, you are mistaken. You surely would not act thus towards a man who, far from having offended you, would yield up his life for you with all his heart." This heroic serenity of demeanour subdued the savage men who had

stationed themselves there to murder him. They remained stupefied for an instant, and threw themselves at his feet, protesting that for the future he should have no servants more devoted to him than they. The holy missionary spoke kindly to them, and bade them take care how they fell in the way of the Baron d'Hermance, who would not be so indulgent to them as he was. Soon after this Francis decided on removing to Thonon; the number of converts increasing so fast required him to be continually on the spot, and he could no longer afford the time for his daily journeys. To reside in the place was, however, still a great risk; and the Baron d'Hermance urged him still to remain in the castle, as men who had attempted to murder him by daylight on the road would be likely to find means of carrying their evil purpose into effect if he lived among them by night as well as day. Francis, however, persisted, and was received at Thonon by his Catholic flock with great joy. One of his biographers thus describes the mode of life led by Francis and his faithful people:

"Nothing (he remarks) could be so like the early Church as the little church of Thonon; the same charity for the brethren, the same zeal for the faith, an exactly similar purity of morals: for Francis made little account of a man's relinquishing his errors, if he did not change his life,—if grace did not superabound where sin had abounded; and the benediction which God had attached to his ministry went at once to enlighten the mind and to change the heart. But nothing so powerfully struck such heretics as were not entirely hardened, as to see the way in which the poor and the sick were succoured. Francis used to employ all he had to live upon in this; so that after having fed others, he was himself often reduced to suffer hunger: he kept continually soliciting his relations and friends to help the poor faithful of the Chablais. He often received sums considerable in themselves, but which were trifling when measured by his charity. The Catholics seconded his zeal to such an extent as to content themselves merely

with what was necessary; and a holy economy was seen to prevail among them, which had no other object in view but the relief of the destitute." (Marsollier's *Life of St. Francis de Sales*, book ii.) One is indeed reminded here of Catholic ways in times very widely apart. The heathen said: "See how these Christians love one another!" In a beautiful chapter of the *Treatise on the Love of God*, Francis relates how St. Pacomius, when yet a Pagan, received his first impulses of admiration for the faith by seeing the charity of the Christians in furnishing provisions for the distressed soldiers of Maxentius. In our own times, an exact observer tells us that the half-pagan population of London are led to entertain a special respect for the Catholic religion from observing that poor Catholics in adversity are so often set on their legs again by the charity of their brethren. (Vide *London Labour and the London Poor*.) The malignity of conscious and wilful heresy is, however, extraordinary. The jealousy and hatred of the ministers increased in proportion to the way which Francis was making among the people, and they once more plotted against his life. Late one night his house was beset by a party of armed men; the holy missionary, according to his custom, was at prayer, and heard the clash of arms and the noise of voices talking in an under-tone. He just had time to conceal himself, when they forced open the door, and ransacked the house to kill him. His hiding-place, however, seems to have been as well chosen as some of those "priests' holes" they show in old English Catholic houses; the wretches failed to discover him, and were obliged to retire, assistance having been unwillingly sent by the magistrates. Enraged at being thus disappointed of their prey, they went about repeating their old story that Francis was a sorcerer, for he could not have escaped if he had not had the gift of making himself invisible. When Francis heard of this charge, he smiled, and making the sign of the cross, said, "Here are all the charms I own; and by this sign I hope to conquer hell, far from being on terms with it."

Now that he resided in Thonon, and as yet it was not prudent to say Mass in the town, he went every morning to offer the holy Sacrifice at Marin, a village on the other side of the river Drance. In June 1598, the bridge having been broken by the floods, he was obliged to cross upon a plank, stretching over a terrible chasm, and often as slippery as glass with its coating of ice. Yet rather than be deprived of saying Mass, he would creep on his hands and knees, at the risk of his life, across the frightful pass. Occasionally he also said Mass in the chapel of the monks of St. Bernard at Montjon, or in that of the castle of Allinges. When he visited the latter, he used to preach and give communion at the neighbouring parish-church. On one occasion the congregation only amounted to seven persons, and he was advised to save himself the trouble of preaching. He replied, however, that he would preach if there were only one person present; he owed instruction to a little flock as well as to a great one. The sermon, which was on the invocation of saints, saved the faith of a gentleman who heard it, and who was on the very verge of apostasy. He now ventured to preach, mounted on a chair, in the market-place of Thonon; when the people would break off business and listen to him, hushed in silence. He was indefatigable in visiting the sick; and as he was in a heretic town, he made his flock understand by his manner when he was carrying the Blessed Sacrament about him, and they followed him reverently at a distance.

The signs of harvest began now to thicken. In April 1598, Francis writes with great satisfaction to Favre, that the Baron d'Avully, one of the most important of the gentry of the place, together with the "syndics," or magistrates of the city, had very recently attended a sermon of his on the Real Presence; and that others, who did not dare to come openly, had endeavoured to hear what they could in a little back lane, where he was afraid his voice could not reach; and that he had seen told the Calvinists intended to publish "a confession of

their faith," to serve as the basis of discussion with him. "The business is now safe," he triumphantly remarks; "for they have begun to parley, and, as the proverb has it, will next come to surrender." *Res est in tuto: jam enim aî colloquia descendunt, mox, ut ex proverbio, ad deditionem venturi.* A very interesting reply from the Senator Favre to this letter is extant, in which he says there had been a report of Francis's returning to Annecy, which he had much hesitated to believe, and had wished particularly to hear from him, in order to learn whether he had merely *come* to Annecy, or had *returned* thither. Like Regulus of old, he might indeed have visited his home; but with the full intention of keeping his word, and going back to Carthage. He congratulates him warmly on the victories he was gaining, and no longer among the *dii minorum gentium*, but among those *melioris notæ*, some of whom he hears have been so overcome by the mere report of Francis's arguments, that they kept out of his way, and avoided meeting or seeing him,—“Good God! how would it have been had they heard you speaking and disputing!”—and others had resolved to conduct the controversy in writing, imagining, for which the senator thought them rash, that their paper, full of lies and impudence as it might be, would not bluish. Viret, the Calvinist minister of Thonon, and his brethren, began to find themselves called upon to take some public steps to counteract Francis. They challenged him to a public disputation, which he gladly accepted; but when the day came, only Viret attended, and made a shuffling excuse, on behalf of himself and the rest, for withdrawing their challenge, on pretence it might offend the Duke of Savoy. Francis obtained for them a written authorisation from the Baron d'Hermance to hold the disputation; but they alleged further idle excuses, and quitted the town without daring to face their formidable opponent. Two great and leading conversions followed soon after: one of them, that of an advocate of distinction, named Poncet; the other, the above-named Baron

d'Avully, who became most useful to Francis by his aid and suggestions in carrying on the work of catholicising the province. Francis considered this conversion of such great importance, that he made a special commemoration of it once a year, on the 4th October, as long as he lived. In the present day, when Protestants are so fond of adopting the system of passing over in silence most convincing treatises on the Catholic side, of "ignoring" them, as the phrase is, it is interesting to observe that the Swiss Calvinists in Francis de Sales' time used precisely the same stratagem towards him; imitating the silly bird in the fable, who, so long as it hides its head from the fowler, thinks that its body is secure. A controversial paper, written by Francis at D'Avully's request before his conversion, was sent to the ministers of Berne and Geneva, and met with no sort of notice. Such a mode of proceeding of course only tended the more to open D'Avully's eyes to the weakness of the Calvinistic heresy, and to the strength of the Catholic argument, from which they could only take refuge in stupid inaction. One instance, indeed, occurred, which showed that had they entered into either controversy or discussion, the result would have been the same. D'Avully persuaded Francis to call on La Faye, a celebrated minister at Geneva, with whom he had a long conference at his own house. As in many such debates, the minister kept continually shifting his ground when pressed on one point, immediately flying to some other objection, and ending in a torrent of the most outrageous invectives, which Francis bore with his usual serenity.

Conversions now began to be numerous, and the success of Francis's mission became the object of general interest and applause. Pope Clement VIII. himself wrote to express his approbation of the zeal and diligence which Francis had shown; and the Duke of Savoy ordered him to come to Turin to advise with him on the means of completing the great work which was so happily begun. It was to be expected some

cross would occur in the midst of such a career of success; and there happened one of a kind particularly trying to a character like that of Francis. Just when he had received his order from the Duke, a brief, dated October 1, 1596, arrived from Pope Clement VIII., in which his Holiness intimated to Francis de Sales, that he had commissioned a Capuchin friar, Father Esprit de Baume, to acquaint him with a great design which he desired him to undertake. This was no other than to attempt the conversion of the celebrated heresiarch Beza, who resided at Geneva, as the successor of Calvin, and chief of his sect. Beza was now very old; and the Holy Father probably thought that Francis's unrivalled powers of persuasion, combined with that tenderness towards early recollections which Beza might be expected to have (for he had been a Catholic till long past his early youth), would be not unlikely to work a change. At a distance, the undertaking seemed inviting; but had his Holiness been on the spot, he would have perceived that the time was not yet arrived for Francis to turn his attention to any thing but carrying on the vast work he had in hand. It was the most critical moment in the conversion of the province; it was very doubtful whether the Duke could be induced formally to establish the Catholic religion in the province; and if this opportunity were lost, the chance might never occur again. Beza, though a great man, was but an individual; and the salvation of thousands depended on the decision of the Duke. Francis saw very distinctly that, although in appearance obedience prompted him to go to Geneva, his real duty, which the Holy Father himself would have enjoined had he been present and known the facts, was to proceed with the mission before him. He was in the position of an officer at a distance from his general, receiving orders which the general himself would reverse if he were at hand; he therefore boldly took the responsibility of acting according to the existing circumstances, which, after a good deal of harassing oppo-

tion, even Father Esprit, with whom the conversion of Beza was a pet scheme, at last admitted was the proper and only course to be pursued.

Francis arrived at Turin in December 1596, after a perilous winter journey across the Alps. He was most flatteringly received by the Duke and all the Court of Piedmont, and was invited to state his views before the Council. He made a long speech, of the most statesmanlike kind, and at the same time full of the ecclesiastical spirit, which lost none of its effect from his youthful appearance. He argued that the time had at length arrived for the state to put forth its energies in completing the work of conversion. The Duke was unwilling to hazard the use of forcible measures for fear of Geneva and Henry IV., who might take advantage of any discontent in the dominions of Savoy. Francis did not recommend force; but he pointed out the dangerous connection which always existed between Calvinism and rebellion, and showed that the bulk of the population did not hold to Calvinism on conviction, but merely because Catholicity had been represented to them in false colours. The ministers evidently maintained their ground on principles which had no claim to respect; for they refused to argue the subject, and had sought on two or three occasions to get rid of the difficulty by attempting to have Francis assassinated. It seemed most unreasonable to allow the presence of such men to stand in the way of the conversion of a whole people. He therefore recommended that all the Protestant ministers should be sent out of the country. He further advised that state-patronage should be transferred from the Protestants to the Catholics, so that no public offices should be held except by Catholics. These were the two strongest points in a memorial which he presented to the government. The others were, the suppression of Protestant books; the establishment of a printing-press at Annecy for the circulation of Catholic publications; the re-establishment of the old parishes throughout the duchy; the restitu-

ST. FRANÇOIS DE SALES.

tion of usurped Church property; the restoration of the church of St. Hippolytus in the town of Thonon for public Catholic worship; the employment of eight active missionaries to travel about the country and preach in all directions, to be maintained out of funds hitherto paid to Protestant ministers; and finally, the establishment of a college of Jesuits at Thonon,—that society being practised in controversy, and best qualified to carry on so difficult a work. His great object was to use the strength of the state to secure a clear field for the action of Catholicity; and at all events to make the people hear and see it. If only they could be brought to this, he could leave the result in the hands of God. Thus, in an earlier memorial, he had recommended that “churches should be refitted in suitable localities, with altars very handsomely adorned; and that the offices should be celebrated decently therein, and with all the solemnities required for the majesty of the Divine service, even with organs, or other similar things, to familiarise the inhabitants with the exercise of the Catholic religion.” It may be interesting here to mention, that Francis, as we read in a letter of his to Madame de Chantal, “knew nothing whatever of music,” though he “loved it extremely when it is applied to the praises of our Lord.”

His plan for the restoration of Catholicity, from the political position of Savoy, was thought daring, especially in the first two points,—the expulsion of the Calvinist ministers, and the transference of state-patronage to the Catholics. These measures the Duke reserved to a later period; but the others, after some discussion, were granted. If the Catholic religion was to be established at all, less than what Francis asked would not have sufficed. The principle of the state being of no religion, and distributing a certain amount of its assistance to all parties alike, was in those days not so much as thought of; and rulers believed themselves intrusted with power and patronage, not only for the temporal well-being of their subjects, but also for the direct see

vice of Almighty God. If people admit the fairness of this view of public duty, but still complain of Francis de Sales' propositions being severe, they have to show in what other manner any religion could have been established. It was precisely a case in which the state might with the most perfect prudence interfere; for the people were so far Catholic as to require only a slight demonstration of the will of the state to decide their wavering convictions, and many of them hesitated only because they thought that will was not sufficiently shown. Affairs being in such a position, it would have been intolerable if a handful of fanatics had been allowed to check the Catholic tendencies of the bulk of the population, or to restrain them in the free exercise of that religion which had been forcibly dispossessed of its ancient rights little more than half a century before.

Francis returned to Thonon, and after ordering prayers for the good success of the arduous undertaking, took measures for the opening of the church of St. Hippolytus at the approaching Christmas of 1596. The announcement was the signal for an alarming sedition, which was favoured by the magistrates themselves. The Calvinists closed the gates, to prevent assistance coming to the Catholics from the country, surrounded the church of St. Hippolytus, and threatened to burn Francis de Sales alive in the midst of the town. The Catholics, on their part, put themselves in a state of defence, occupied various strong points, and placed a guard at the house of their beloved apostle. The crowd having dispersed at nightfall, Francis at once sent workmen into the church. Disturbances again broke out in the morning; and the two parties were on the point of coming to blows, when Francis, with that serene courage for which he was so remarkable, came between, and addressed the Calvinists in a firm but conciliatory speech; assuring them that it was no part of the Duke's plan to deprive them of the liberty of conscience they enjoyed, but that he was determined the Catholic

should at least have one church in which to exercise their religion, and that he was merely putting the Catholics in possession of what had been their own for many centuries. The Calvinists hesitated; and at length agreed to a compromise, by which Francis was allowed to proceed, pending an appeal from both parties to the Duke. Having thus made good his footing in the church, Francis worked with inconceivable diligence to get it ready, so as to celebrate Christmas with all the splendour possible under the circumstances. He effected this great triumph; all the Catholics from the neighbouring country poured in to witness the sacred mysteries, which had for nearly two generations been banished from the desecrated temples; eight hundred people received holy communion from his hands; and in the course of the octave, the inhabitants of three villages came *en masse* to abjure their heresy in his hands. The little spark he had been fanning so long was now indeed kindling into a flame; the harvest of conversions was now so abundant he could hardly gather it in; and the amount of labour in "sick-calls" became proportionately great, as Thonon and the rest of the province were gradually becoming Catholic, and no priests to attend to them but Francis, his brother, and a very few assistants. He preached, he taught, he conversed, he traversed the district incessantly, discharging even the duties of legal adviser and physician as well as priest to his poor people, for which his education at Padua had made him highly competent. The day was not sufficient for his toils; for he preferred to carry the Blessed Sacrament to the sick by night, lest the heretics should insult It in the day-time, and so compel him to have recourse to secular assistance, which he was always so anxious to use as little as possible. He lay down for but a short time, most frequently in his clothes, and spent the rest of the night in prayer, or in preparing his instructions for the next day. Work like this told upon his constitution in the end. In one of his letters he remarks, that young people are apt to think they

can bear long watches, but that they suffer for them at a later period; and he will not allow his penitents to sit up to meditate. When, however, he knew the service of God required it, he was not the man to spare himself. "It is not necessary," he said, "for me to live; but it is necessary for the Church to be served."

The following year, 1597, another field was opened for his zeal and prudence, similar to that which he had worked so well in the early days of his mission in the castle of Allinges. A regiment commanded by the Count de Martinengue was sent by the Duke of Savoy to occupy Thonon, and to act under the advice of Francis. The wise and holy missionary only used this great power to secure good order among the troops. They flocked to hear his sermons, which he now, instead of being controversial, made to turn on the great truths of the Christian religion, and on moral duties, which would come home to new and old Catholics alike. Most of them, officers as well as men, made general confessions; and they were so delighted with the precepts which Francis gave them, especially relating to temptations that they should guard against hereafter, that, at their entreaty, he put them into writing, and added a set of rules for a Christian life adapted to the military state. It would be most interesting if this were still to be found among his writings.

Matters were now so far settled at Thonon, that Francis thought himself able to undertake the task assigned to him by the Holy Father, and endeavour to convert the great heresiarch of Geneva. It was a difficult business even to get access to him; for Beza was then an old man, and his house was daily so thronged by his adherents, that it was hardly possible to have an interview with him without attracting observation. Francis, however, resolved to make the attempt, and prepared for it, as he did for all arduous offices, by much fasting and prayer, and by writing to his Bishop and chapter, and to all virtuous persons he knew who were fit to be intrusted with the secret, to ask their

prayers for the happy termination of the enterprise. After several ineffectual attempts, he succeeded in obtaining an interview with Beza on Easter Tuesday, 1597. The old man received him with much courtesy; and was greatly agitated during a part of the conference, particularly when Francis pressed upon him the question whether it was possible to be saved in the Catholic Church; which Beza, after a severe struggle with himself, was obliged to admit, notwithstanding the obvious consequence that the Protestant schism was indefensible. They had two other interviews, in the last of which Beza showed himself much softened, having had a remarkable dream, in which it appeared to him he was brought to the judgment-seat of God, and that he obtained a respite for penance by the intercession of the Blessed Virgin. He also was deeply grateful for the prayers which the venerable Bishop of Geneva had for years offered up on his behalf. But the iron fetters in which his position held him were too strong to be broken by these last impressions of grace. The heresiarch, whom a saint had laboured to convert, died as he had lived, an alien to the true fold.

During this year, an act of extreme cruelty and injustice on the part of the Protestants contributed to strengthen the cause of Francis. A poor minister of the name of Galletin, ashamed of the shuffling of his brethren when challenged by Francis to meet him at Geneva, came to Thonon himself, and held many conferences with the Saint, which ended in his conviction of the truths of Catholicity, though not in his conversion. He had admitted, however, too much to be forgiven by his co-religionists, who, on his return to Berne, as it is generally stated by the historians, procured his condemnation to death.

Francis de Sales now had three energetic assistants sent him by his bishop; two of them Capuchins, Father Cherubin of Maurienne, and Father Esprit de Baume, previously mentioned, and a Jesuit from Chambéry, named Saurier. With these ecclesiastics and his cousin

Louis de Sales, he held a council, to deliberate on his plan of action, at Annemasse, a place on the Lake of Geneva, about eighteen miles from Thonon, which had always remained faithful to Catholicity. Here, in September of the same year, 1597, he celebrated a solemn *Quarant' Ore*, to which no fewer than 30,000 people resorted from all the vicinity. Francis himself, in surplice and stole, accompanied a grand procession, in which they carried the crucifix from Thonon to Annemasse, singing litanies and hymns as they marched, and being joined at each village by fresh bands of converts. On this occasion he restored an ancient cross on the high-road from Annemasse to Geneva, which had been overthrown by the heretics, and attached to it a scroll, with the following verses written by himself:

"Ce n'est la pierre ni le bois
Que le Catholique adore;
Mais le Roi qui, mort en croix,
De son sang la croix honore."

It may be interesting to mention, that among the means he used to attract the feelings of a simple and unlettered population, was that of the old mystery-plays. He made his cousin the Canon de Sales and his brother Louis compose a dramatic piece of this kind on the sacrifice of Abraham; and when it was acted, he himself took the part of the Eternal Father. This, of course, would strike Protestants as irreverent; but it is an accusation they ought to be slow to bring against Francis de Sales. He doubtless felt in this, as in every thing he uttered, that he was speaking for God's greater glory, and to do Him service.

In the beginning of 1598 the Jesuits were established at Thonon, and all went on with the utmost activity. During a short interval, when Francis was absent at the castle of Sales in consequence of an attack of fever, the ministers ventured on holding a conference with the Catholic clergy he left at Thonon; but on his return, disgracefully shrank from continuing the

disputations. The treaty of Vervins, ratified on May 2d of this year, by which the possession of the Chablais and the bailiwick of Tannier were ceded by France to Savoy, constitutes an epoch which brings us nearly to the close of this great act in the career of Francis. As this treaty removed all fears of these provinces falling into the hands of the Protestants of Berne, the Bishop determined to celebrate a Quarant' Ore at Thonon by way of thanksgiving. After several delays, this solemnity was celebrated with great rejoicing on September 20th; during the whole time it lasted, procession after procession entered Thonon from the neighbouring villages, composed of converts who wished publicly to renounce their heresy, and be received into the Catholic Church. Conversions on such a scale had probably never been witnessed since the miracles of Pentecost. Pontifical Mass was celebrated by the Bishop of Geneva in the church of St. Augustine, and the Blessed Sacrament was then carried in triumph through the principal streets. On the first day there arrived successively bands of penitents from Taninge, Bellevaux, Boège, St. Cergues, Fessy, and Perrigny, clad in white, and most of them seeking to be reconciled to the Church. On the following day came similar processions from Cluses, Sallanches, and the mountain-districts of Faucigny; then a procession from Bonneville; then a procession of the nobility of the Chablais, another from Evian, and, lastly, one from Ternier.

On September 30th, the Duke of Savoy and the Cardinal de Medici (afterwards Pope Leo XI.), who had been the chief negotiator in the treaty of Vervins, arrived in Thonon; and the Quarant' Ore was solemnly renewed on October 1st, in the church of St. Augustine, the duke and cardinal, with all the nobles of the court, assisting at the ceremonies, which were conducted with extraordinary splendour. There were processions of the Blessed Sacrament through the streets, which were richly adorned with tapestry and verdure; and various emblematical exhibitions, in the style of the

age, were got up to express the popular sense of thanksgiving. Hundreds of people kept flocking to make their abjuration; and the Quarant Ore terminated with the inauguration of a crucifix in a street called, in Catholic times, "Cross Street," from a remarkable crucifix which had been overthrown by the heretics. Francis de Sales preached the sermon on this joyful occasion; and thenceforward the Chablais might be considered once more, what it has continued ever since, a Catholic country. The very few heretics who remained either yielded to the very moderate and reasonable exercise of the civil power, which at last the Duke thought it his duty to put forth, and which simply amounted to the establishment of Catholicity as the state religion, to the exclusion of Protestantism; or else sought refuge in the more congenial atmosphere of Berne and Geneva. The spiritual conquests achieved by Francis, in the conversions we have recorded, were commonly reckoned to amount to 72,000 souls.

The holy missionary now retired to take rest for a short time at the castle of Sales. His father had long since acquiesced in his son's heroic undertaking, and the castle had become a general refuge for those of the converts of Francis who were thrown upon the world. Whilst he was on this visit, the venerable Bishop of Geneva earnestly pressed him to accept the coadjutorship, which he had long destined for him. Francis, like most of the saints who have been called to the episcopal dignity, long resisted; and it was only after vehement entreaties on the part of the bishop, his clergy, and all his friends, that he at last perceived it was the will of Almighty God he should undertake this dreaded responsibility. Shortly after this, he fell sick of a fever, from which, after his life for a time was despaired of, he wonderfully recovered. During part of this illness he was afflicted with terrible temptations against the faith; especially with a particular objection against the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, the solution to which he did not find out

ill after his recovery. This temptation he at the time overcame by frequent acts of faith, invocation of the Holy Name of Jesus, and the use of the sign of the Cross. He always refused to tell any one what this temptation was, except his cousin Louis de Sales, under a promise of secrecy,—fearing lest weaker minds might perceive the difficulty more readily than they could its answer.

CHAPTER V

APPOINTMENT OF FRANCIS DE SALES TO THE COADJUTORSHIP OF
GENEVA—HIS VISIT TO ROME.

ON his recovery, Francis de Sales started for Rome, in Feb. 1599, along with the Abbé de Chissé, nephew and vicar-general of the Bishop of Geneva. Having arrived at the Holy City, he visited with the utmost ardour of devotion most of its great sanctuaries; and, in particular, his visit to the catacombs was noticed as having filled him with extraordinary sentiments of charity and consolation. On one occasion, the Abbé de Chissé found him in the catacombs in such an ecstasy of prayer, that he scarcely perceived what was passing or who addressed him; he was shedding tears so profusely, that for a moment his friend thought that he must have had some bad tidings from home. This deep emotion in visiting the catacombs constitutes a remarkable point of similarity between the spirit of St. Philip Neri and St. Francis de Sales. The holy founder of the Oratorians used to spend whole days in the catacombs, in order to penetrate his whole soul with the atmosphere of the primitive ages of the Church; and it was there that Francis learnt to become the very image of the life of the early bishops and doctors. The visit to the catacombs which we have described was on the 13th of March; and it was on the following day that Francis was first presented to the Pope by Cardinal de Medici, who, in introducing him, called him by the title of "the Apostle of the Chablais." In this interview Francis presented to the Holy Father a great number of requests on the part of his Bishop, of which the most interesting was a petition for the separation of the benefices of the Chablais from the military order of SS. Maurice and Lazarus. At the time when the

city of Geneva expelled its Bishop, and Calvinism was established throughout the province, Gregory XIII. had adopted a very bold but sagacious expedient for keeping the Church property out of the hands of the Protestants; he transferred it provisionally from the clergy to the Knights of SS. Maurice and Lazarus; their energy and determination not being likely to yield to the cupidity of the Protestants. They were to give up the property, if ever the Catholic religion should be restored, and meanwhile to pay the stipends of the small number of priests who were required for the diminished Catholic population. The measure, in the end, was completely successful; but for a time, as we shall see, the selfish desire of the knights to detain the property after all reason for their provisional tenure of it had ceased, gave a great deal of trouble. By other articles in his petition, the Bishop asked leave to devote a portion of the tithes, offerings, and other revenues, to make up for the deficiencies in the stipends of the curés and to support a certain number of ecclesiastics, to be called canons-theological, whose services in preaching would be especially necessary in a country like the Chablais, newly recovered from heresy. Various powers of dispensation were asked for, in consideration of the great distance and poverty of the inhabitants. The most curious, however, of the articles, to the eye of an antiquarian, is one in which the Bishop demanded power to abolish the exaction of certain servitudes from the subjects of the diocese, which appeared insulting and painful alike for a Christian bishop to exact, and for his subjects to render. One of these was an old custom by which the inhabitants on the borders of the lake were obliged to keep watch to hinder the frogs from croaking, and thereby disturbing the rest of the prelate. This was a relic of the feudal simplicity of the middle ages, which the times of course had long outgrown, and which had become only an irritating source of annoyance and humiliation. Among other vexatious customs was the right of the Bishop to be

sole heir to testators who died childless. It was the influence of Francis which brought about the removal of these and similar burdens.

At another interview, the Abbé de Chissé presented to the Holy Father the Bishop's demand that Francis should be his coadjutor, with the right of succession. This was granted in the most gracious terms, and March the 22d was appointed for his examination. Francis, as usual at all great steps of his life, prepared for this event by long meditations at the foot of the crucifix, by spending almost the whole night in prayer, and by saying Mass for that intention. In his final prayers on this occasion he made the heroic petition to our Lord, that, supposing he would be a useless servant in the episcopal office, he might pass a bad examination and be overwhelmed with confusion. The examination, indeed, was of a kind to appal any one not possessed of considerable firmness as well as learning. It was held in a hall of the pontifical palace, in the presence of the Pope, seated on his throne and surrounded by an august assembly of Cardinals, among whom were Frederic Borromeo, Baronius, Borghese, and Medici. Bellarmine was also present, and a number of less known but still important persons of the day.

Such an effect had this grand sight upon a Spanish prelate, who was to be examined on the same occasion, that he fainted, and was obliged to be taken out. The utmost kindness was shown him, and leave was given for him to be consecrated without the usual examination; but he actually expired within a few hours. Francis de Sales was examined by the Pope himself, and by the other great theologians whom we have named. Thirty-five questions were put to him on various subjects of the civil and canon law and of theology, only two of which have been preserved. The first of these was asked by Bellarmine, and turned upon the formal cause of the beatitude of the Saints, in regard to which Francis adopted the opinions of those who maintain that it belongs to the intellect and the will, placing

it in the love of the superior good which is seen, and in the vision of the Superior Being Who is loved. The other, which was asked by the Holy Father, related to the powers of dispensation enjoyed by Bishops, in which Francis expressed a view which his Holiness corrected, and which Francis at once modestly withdrew. The highest admiration was felt by all at the manner in which he passed the examination; and at its conclusion, Clement VIII., descending from his throne, embraced the holy bishop elect, and said in a loud voice: *Bibe, fili mi, aquam de cisternâ tuâ, et fluenta putei tui; deriventur fontes tui foras, et in plateis aquas tuas divide* (Prov. v. 15, 16). "Drink, my son, water out of thy own cistern, and the streams of thy own well; let thy fountains be conveyed abroad, and in the streets divide thy waters." The bulls appointing Francis de Sales Bishop of Nicopolis and coadjutor of Geneva were expedited on March 24th; and the Holy Father sanctioned all the arrangements proposed by the holy prelate with reference to the affairs of the diocese, and the reconstruction of the religious establishment of the Chablais. In this case, therefore, the delay habitual to the conduct of business in Rome was not extended very far; though, indeed, Francis praised that slowness, not only as a proof of the wisdom of the Holy See, but as giving time to strangers to satisfy their devotion in the sanctuaries of the Holy City.

Whilst at Rome, Francis contracted intimate friendship with several of the great men then living there, such as Bellarmine, Baronius, and Giovenali Ancina, the last-mentioned of whom afterwards became Bishop of Saluzzo in Piedmont, and was visited there by Francis. Ancina, like Baronius, was among the most eminent disciples of St. Philip Neri; and from them Francis imbibed much of the spirit of the Oratory, which he calls in his letters, *præclarum vivendi modum*. He left Rome on March 31st, and returned to Piedmont, taking Loretto in his way, where he again paid deep and ardent homage to the Blessed Virgin in the Holy House of Nazareth,

where her most favoured children have received so many graces, and offered up so many vows. He also visited Milan, where he obtained the "life" of St. Charles Borromeo, to whom he always had a great devotion, and by whose example he very much guided himself.

On arriving at Annecy, the first affair he had to transact was the difficult and thorny undertaking of transferring the Church-property of the Chablais and the adjoining bailiwicks from the knights of SS. Lazarus and Maurice to its original destination. Though the fact that these districts were now almost entirely converted to the Catholic faith was patent and undeniable, and consequently no excuse could be offered for maintaining what from the first was only a provisional state of things, yet the knights pertinaciously insisted that they provided yearly payment for a sufficient number of priests; when it was evident that the Catholic population required far more than they allowed. In the spirit of a mere corporation, they offered the most vexatious opposition; and no less than two years elapsed before even the unwearied patience and wonderful tact of Francis de Sales were able to carry out the arrangements, for which he had obtained the sanction both of the Holy See and of the government of Savoy.

Another favourite scheme he had devised was, to remove the seat of the bishopric from Annecy to Thonon; a change which would probably have had a great effect in strengthening the faith of the newly-revived population. So many difficulties, however, attended the carrying out of this idea, that he was obliged to give it up. He succeeded, however, in founding a very remarkable institution, which he had meditated for a long time, and the plan of which he had placed before the Holy See in his visit to Rome. This was an establishment, which, under the name of the "Holy House," was intended to assist those of the converts in the Chablais whose reconciliation to the Church had placed them in temporal difficulties, as well as for other purposes which we shall presently describe.

CHAPTER VI

FOUNDATION OF "THE HOLY HOUSE"—VISIT TO PARIS.

IT is obvious that when such a number of conversions had been effected in the manner we have related, cases of great individual suffering must often have occurred. Had the whole population been simultaneously reconciled to the Church, matters would, of course, have gone on after the conversions as they did before. But the movement, although ultimately taking in the entire people, was, as we have seen, a very gradual affair, extending over a number of years. Converts, herefore, from time to time were thrown out of employment, and families broken up; so that an amount of distress was commonly witnessed of a similar kind to what has taken place in England during the last ten years. Francis de Sales assisted the poor converts to the utmost of his power, and was in the habit of raising money from his wealthier friends for the same purpose. The necessities, however, which were daily increasing, required some larger and more permanent means of relief than private and occasional charity could supply. There was another reason also which made it very important that some means of employment should be opened, adequate to provide for the converts, and in the city of Thonon itself. The continual communication with Geneva, for the sake of traffic, service, and business in general, was attended with great danger to the faith of the poor converts of Thonon. The lower classes resorted thither for merchandise, or to obtain places as servants, and the higher ranks of society for education. The authorities of Geneva, moreover, put a sort of premium on apostasy, by holding out every kind of civil advantage as the

reward of abjuring the Catholic religion. On the other hand, the persecution to which those inhabitants of Geneva were subjected who embraced Catholicity, drove many into exile, or plunged them into the depths of poverty. It was therefore desirable, as far as possible, to break the connection between the newly-reclaimed provinces and those head-quarters of hostility to the Catholic Church, by providing for the new converts the means of livelihood at home. Lastly, it was now an object of the most pressing importance, to educate clergy for the spiritual provision of the thousands gathered indeed into the fold, but who were without any thing like a sufficient staff of pastors to take care of them. The number brought over by Francis and his three or four assistants required a large body of clergy throughout the province; and this, even when the difficulty of endowments was overcome, could not be supplied unless an extensive seminary were created. The institution which Francis de Sales founded to meet this purpose has been comparatively lost sight of in the lustre of the great religious order with which his name is associated. It was, nevertheless, one of the most interesting kind, and full of hints which may be studied with great advantage in our own times.

"The Holy House," which name he probably assigned to it from a devout remembrance of the joy with which he had visited the hallowed shrine of Loretto, was a sort of combination of the university, the religious congregation, and the mechanics' guild. As a university, it was to supply the means of education which had been sought for at Geneva; as a religious congregation, it was to train up a body of priests qualified for carrying on the great missionary work which he had begun; and as a mechanics' guild, it was not only to teach various trades to those who might be out of employment, but also to furnish a market for their labours. In this respect, the idea of it reminds us of one of the most interesting of the numerous institutions of Catholic France at the present day,—we allude to the *Œuvre de*

S. Nicolas at Paris, where poor boys are taught handicraft trades; and with such success, that the institute itself is not only self-supporting, but is effecting wonders for the amelioration of what are called the dangerous classes. The Holy House, moreover, was in general to furnish a refuge for those converts who might be thrown upon the world, till some permanent situation could be found for them.

It were much to be wished that we had details as to the practical working of the secular part of this institution; but of this we know little, although the information on record as to the ecclesiastical department is both copious and interesting.

The establishment was founded in virtue of a bull of Pope Clement VIII. What constitutes a very curious and characteristic feature of it is, that it was to be governed by a prefect and seven secular priests, who were to follow as much as possible the rules of the Roman Oratory. In the statutes drawn up for the Holy House by Francis, it is, in fact, called "the Oratory of our Lady of Compassion of Thonon." The holy disciple of St. Philip Neri, Cardinal Baronius, was appointed its first protector; Francis himself being its first prefect.

It was constituted into a regular university, particularly on the model of those of Bologna and Perugia, and divided into four sections, according to the purposes we have mentioned; the first, which was, in fact, an ecclesiastical seminary, consisting of the above-mentioned prefect and seven priests, and of seven choristers. The most important of their rules were as follow: The hour of rising was to be at four o'clock from Easter to All Saints' day; there was to be Mass every morning: the whole of the Divine Office to be chanted on festivals of the first class, and on those of the Blessed Virgin; on other days they were to chant the three last little hours, with Vespers and Compline, and always to observe with the most scrupulous exactness the ceremonial of the Cathedral of Geneva. All the priests were to attend every Monday a conference on cases of

conscience and ceremonies ; and another on Tuesday, on the spiritual and temporal administration of the house, and on the observance of the rules. They were to dine at a common table, never to leave the house without mentioning where they were going, and to return in the evening at the ringing of the Angelus. There were to be two almoners charged with the distribution of relief to the poor. The second department was devoted to preaching, and consisted of a certain number of Capuchin friars, who were to go about and assist the secular clergy in that way. The educational department was at first placed under the care of the Jesuits ; afterwards lay teachers held it for a time, but managed the business very indifferently. The Barnabites were finally engaged for those duties, and in their hands the college prospered exceedingly. The remaining department of the college was devoted to the new converts, or to persons desirous of instruction. Here the poorest were taught trades and handicrafts, and put in the way of gaining their livelihood.

Whilst Francis was thus engaged in the very thick of negotiation and practical labours, his pen was not idle. In the early part of the year 1600 he completed a great controversial work, the *Standard of the Holy Cross*, in reply to a pamphlet, in which the Calvinist minister Lafaye had poured out abuse against the homage Catholics pay to the symbol of our redemption. The book is richly furnished with authorities from the Sacred Scripture, from the fathers and doctors, and is an excellent storehouse of arguments for the Catholic reasoner ; though less known, comparatively speaking, than the devotional treatises of our Saint.

The same year, a collision between France and Savoy placed the pacific conquests of the holy Bishop in great danger. By another treaty concluded at Paris between Henry IV. and the Duke of Savoy, the latter had engaged to cede to the king the marquisate of Saluzzo, a district the Dukes of Savoy had seized during the wars of the League, on condition of receiving the province of

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La Bresse and some other disputed possessions. Henry IV. having fulfilled his part of the agreement, the Duke of Savoy refused to give up Saluzzo; and the consequence was, that those provinces of Savoy adjoining to France, among which were the Chablais and Ternier, were immediately occupied by the French forces, under the command of the Duke of Lesdiguières, of whom we shall hear afterwards. The republic of Geneva, of course, aided this invasion, and petitioned Henry IV. to extend the Edict of Nantes to their country, so as to restore the free exercise of the Protestant religion, and in all probability destroy the results of the five years of toil which Francis had bestowed upon them. The holy prelate sought and obtained an interview with the great Henry at the castle of Annecy; and such was the impression produced upon that wise monarch, both by the arguments which Francis de Sales urged for the interests of Catholicity, and by the charm of his manners and presence, that the king promised that no change should take place in the ecclesiastical affairs of the Chablais. He was treated by the king with the highest consideration; and it was noticed even that Henry IV. held his hat in his hand during the entire conference,—an extraordinary mark of respect in that age of etiquette and formality. During the course of this war, Francis de Sales, having occasion to visit the castle of Allinges, in order to remonstrate with the governor, whom the Calvinists had induced to seize on some of the Church-property, was taken prisoner by a party of the French soldiers. Their commander, the Marquis de Vitry, showed him the utmost reverence, and aided him in stopping the further invasion of those rights which Henry IV. had guaranteed. During the remainder of the year he was employed in the reconstruction of the parishes in the converted districts; and succeeded in settling no fewer than twenty-five, in arranging an excellent system of grouping the different parishes in the manner of rural deaneries, in distributing amongst them, in due proportion, the proceeds of the property

hitherto held by the knights of SS. Maurice and Lazarus, and lastly, in appointing priests to each of the parishes. In the spring of the following year, 1601, he had the affliction of losing his father. The brave old noble made a most Christian end; feeling, indeed, that it was a sacrifice for him, a knight who had seen so many hard-fought fields, to die ingloriously in his bed. Like Siward Earl of Northumberland, in our old history, he wanted to have his armour brought to him, that at least he might die in harness. But these human feelings, the result of the chivalrous ideas in which he had been brought up, gave place to holier thoughts. On taking leave of his children, he charged them to revere Francis as their father, and died with the greatest resignation and piety, after having devoutly received the last Sacraments. Francis was absent at the time of his death, being engaged in preaching the Lent at Annecy. He received the news as he was ascending the pulpit; but preached nevertheless with his usual calmness, recommending, at the close of his sermon, the soul of his good father to the prayers of his faithful flock.

The disputes between France and Savoy were at length adjusted by a fresh treaty contracted at Lyons, by which the latter government yielded to the former, among other possessions, the important territories to the north of the Lake of Geneva, called the *Pays de Gex*, belonging to the diocese of Geneva, and containing thirty-seven parishes, with about 30,000 inhabitants. The bailiwick of Gaillard, a small district adjoining Thonon, was ceded to Savoy by the same treaty, and the Catholic religion re-established in it without any great trouble; the conversion of the Chablais having made the work generally much easier, and there being still considerable traces of the faith among the people, among whom Calvinism had only prevailed about sixty years. The territory of Gex presented a more difficult business; the republic of Geneva making it a strong point to obtain from Henry IV. the ratification of their

unjust tenure of several villages, of which they had robbed the cathedral chapter of Geneva, and which would have furnished so many centres of proselytism throughout the province. The Bishop of Geneva sent Francis de Sales to Paris to counteract these claims of the Calvinist republic. He was accompanied on his journey by the President Favre, whose vast legal attainments and high consideration in Savoy, no less than his ancient friendship for Francis de Sales, made his presence valuable on such a mission. They arrived at Paris on Jan. 22d, 1602; and Francis remained there several months, as the negotiation proved a very tedious one. Francis presented an elaborate memorial to Henry IV., demanding the free exercise of the Catholic religion in Gex, and the restitution of so much of the Church property as had been appropriated during the late troubles. Henry IV. and his politic minister Villeroy were very slow in meeting these demands; and Francis had abundant opportunities for the practice of his unwearied patience and tact. Yet his stay at Paris was full of advantage to the Church. The brilliant court of the French capital was completely carried away with admiration for the eloquence of the coadjutor of Geneva, or by that indescribable charm which his very presence exercised on all who beheld him. At the request of Marie of Luxembourg, Duchess of Mercœur, he preached in the church of Notre Dame a sermon at the obsequies of her husband, Philip-Emmanuel of Lorraine, before a princely array of cardinals, prelates, and the great noblesse of France; on which occasion not only the eloquence and piety of his words were admired, but also the exquisite prudence he displayed in his eulogy of the deceased duke, who, as a chief of the League, had been a formidable enemy of Henry IV. During his whole stay in Paris, which lasted for six months, Francis was continually preaching, leaving himself hardly time to eat or sleep; and his zeal was rewarded by several great conversions among the Calvinist noblesse. One of them was a Countess de Per-

dreauville, who received her first impressions in favour of Catholicity from a sermon preached by Francis on the Last Judgment, without the introduction of any controversial matter at all. Henry IV. himself, one of the most sagacious observers of his time, was exceedingly struck with the holy prelate, and always spoke of him in terms of the utmost admiration. "M. de Genève," said he, "is the very phoenix of prelates. The rest have almost always their weak side: in one it is learning, in another piety, in others birth; whereas M. de Genève unites all in the highest degree, both illustrious birth, and rare learning, and eminent piety." He pressed him to accept a bishopric in France, which Francis refused; playfully observing, that he was already married to a poor wife, and must not forsake her for a richer one: he had taken the see of Geneva, distressed as it was, for better and for worse. Such was the desire of the French king to secure him, that he repeated the offer no less than five times, and in vain brought in the influence of others to induce Francis to accept it. Had he done so, effects might have followed that are little thought of. Henry IV. seriously entertained the idea of sending him into England, with the view of attempting the conversion of James I.; and at a later period, when it was known that that monarch had bestowed high praise on Francis' treatise *On the Love of God*, and wished he could become acquainted with its author, the holy prelate eagerly caught at the prospect of his conversion, and would probably have taken the English mission, but for the Duke of Savoy's refusal to allow of his departure.

The influence which Francis exercised on French society was, however, so great, that his six-months' visit to Paris left a greater impress on it than other men could have given in a lifetime. He became the friend and adviser of the persons most distinguished at that time for virtue and religion; such as the Cardinal de Bérulle, founder of the French oratory, Madame Acaris (afterwards Sister Mary of the Incarnation, who

was beatified by Pius VI.), the Duchess de Longueville, the celebrated Arnauld, and others of that stamp. It was at this period that several of those friendships were formed, to which we owe some of the most beautiful and valuable portions of his correspondence; such, for example, as that remarkable letter he addressed, shortly after his return, to the abbess of the Hotel Dieu, a convent in which the aristocratic spirit of the age had allowed distinctions to creep in, to the ruin of the monastic spirit of poverty; and which he points out with unrivalled delicacy and kindness, and suggests the means for accomplishing the difficult undertaking of a return to the ancient rule. It will be perceived that we have mentioned among his friends in the religious world of Paris one or two who afterwards unhappily became entangled in the Jansenist party. We ought, however, to recollect, that it was many years before their real character developed itself as they now stand in ecclesiastical history. Yet the instinct of Francis, totally opposed as it always was to the least shadow of heresy, led him, long before that fatal spirit had manifested itself, to reject the application of Angélique Arnauld to be admitted into the order of the Visitation. Nothing definite, beyond a certain pride that showed itself in her disposition, seems to have determined him to this; but it showed in a singular manner the unerring judgment by which saints anticipate and repel evil before common eyes can detect it.

In general society, too, a powerful effect was produced by this short sojourn of a saint in a city which was then, as now, the vortex of dissipation, as well as the centre of religious action. Many of those immersed in the pleasures of the world, dated from his visit their return to the fear of God. With a patience that nothing could weary out, with a winning sweetness that the hardest heart could not resist, he would watch his opportunity to edge in a word just at the moment when it would be felt; never saying too much, or hurrying on souls faster than Almighty God intended

them to go. In short, the way in which he turned to vast account a period of time which, to other men, would have been but a tedious parenthesis, and accomplished a great by-work at intervals, when the work which brought him to Paris could not be proceeded with, is one of the most instructive passages in his life. However, his original mission to Paris did receive an accomplishment in some degree. After much harass and delay, in the course of which Francis de Sales was falsely accused of sharing in a political conspiracy against Henry IV., but out of which affair his dignity and innocence only appeared with the greater lustre, the French king ended by charging the Baron de Luz, governor of Burgundy, to re-establish the exercise of the Catholic religion throughout Gex, wherever there were a sufficient number of Catholics; only taking care to proceed gradually, so as to avoid giving alarm to the Protestants. He also formally took the ecclesiastics of those districts under his special patronage, and invited Francis de Sales to choose pastors for the re-constituted parishes, whose prudence and charity would qualify them for the difficult position in which they would be placed. This was not all that had been asked: still it was something; and Francis now decided to return into Savoy, especially as the failing health of the aged Bishop of Geneva made it necessary for him to hasten his consecration. The kind and noble old man, who, without any extraordinary ability, was a model of the patriarchal simplicity of bishops of the apostolic days, died before his saintly coadjutor reached home. Some time previous to his death, which took place in September 1602, he had the consolation of celebrating the jubilee at Thonon, by which the history of its conversion was concluded and wound up with a sort of ecstacy of rejoicing and thanksgiving. Hundreds of thousands of pilgrims of all ranks, in masses numbering one, two, or even four thousands, each preceded with crucifix and banner as they advanced, poured from all the country round, making the Alpine valleys resound with their

pious chants. More than a hundred confessors were engaged continually at the tribunal of penance; and altogether 62,000 communions were made in the church of Thonon, where, but a few years before, it needed the heroic courage of a saint to venture over from the fortress of Allinges to minister to a handful of Catholics, who tremblingly kept alive the lamp of faith amidst the darkness of triumphant heresy. During this joyful festival, the "Holy House" was canonically erected by the bishop, agreeably to the bulls granted by the Pope, and united in perpetuity to the church of St. Hippolytus, under the title of Our Lady of Compassion, under whose invocation he also placed the high altar. After the ceremony, he caused to be inscribed, in letters of gold, on the vaulting of the church, those words which on no occasion could more appropriately have been uttered: *Gaude, Maria virgo, cunctas hæreses sola interemisti in universo mundo.* Could a happier and holier termination be imagined for the long toils with which this aged prelate, white with years, had earned his everlasting crown?

CHAPTER VII.

FRANCIS DE SALES AS BISHOP OF GENÈVA.

IN returning homewards, Francis de Sales took the Pays de Gex in his way, where he re-established five parishes; one of them the town of Gex itself, where he placed as pastor his cousin, Louis de Sales, who undertook the office without salary. He then retired to the castle of Sales, to make a twenty-days' retreat previously to receiving consecration. In this retreat he placed himself under the direction of one of the Jesuits from Thonon, Father Forrier; he made a general confession, and, with much fasting and prayer, drew up a rule of life for conducting himself in the episcopal office. This document, which enters into the minutest details, is still extant; and is alike interesting, both as throwing into strong relief his personal character and habits, and as a beautiful conception of the example which a bishop ought to exhibit to his flock. He first regulates externals, such as his dress and household arrangements: as to the former, he resolves to wear no habits made of silk, or any more costly material than he had been accustomed to, but would have them neat and well-fitting; he would never appear in public without rochet and mantle, and would always wear the beretta whether in public or private; he excludes several elegances made use of in dress by high ecclesiastics of the day, and his only ornaments are the chaplet suspended at his girdle, which latter he allows to be made of silk, and the pastoral ring, which marked the indissoluble union of the holy pastor to his church; he resolves that his tonsure shall always be in a state to be extremely noticeable; his beard round, not pointed, and without moustaches over the upper lip. As to his household, he resolves to have no useless or superfluous

servants: his household shall consist of two ecclesiastics, one for the management of affairs, and the other to assist in the Divine Office; they must be plainly habited in the Roman dress, or in that of the priests of the seminary of Milan, being the least expensive. The remainder of the establishment comprises a secretary, two valets, a cook and kitchen-boy, and a lackey, whose livery is to be tawny, with violet borders. None of them are to wear feathers, swords, long hair or moustaches, or gay colours,—the usual vanities of the ruffling serving-men of the time, such as would certainly have found no harbour in the house of the Bishop of Geneva. They were to confess and communicate once a month, hear Mass every day, and the Divine Office on days of obligation; their hour for rising was to be five o'clock, their bed-time ten; previous to which they were to attend the litanies, to be read by the Bishop: viz. on Sunday, that of the Name of Jesus; on Monday, of the Saints; on Tuesday, of the Angels; on Wednesday, of St. Peter the Apostle, patron of the church of Geneva; on Thursday, of the Blessed Sacrament; on Friday, of our Lord's Passion; and on Saturday, of the Blessed Virgin. He is particular in exacting great courtesy to be shown by his servants towards all, especially priests, whether of the inferior class or not. Every chamber was to have an oratory, a holy-water font, some devout picture, and an *Agnus Dei*; two only were to be carpeted, one for strangers, the other a reception-room. His table was to be frugal, but neat and decent; the priests were to take it in turns to say grace; and some book of devotion was to be read till dinner was half over, after which conversation was to proceed. The dinner-hour was to be ten; that of supper, six. Alms were to be publicly given on certain days, both to the poor, and to religious orders like the Capuchins and the Poor Clares, and to the hospital. He lays stress on publicity, for the sake of example. Special and extraordinary alms were to be administered as "the unction"—the grace imparted

by his consecration—should suggest. Then follows a list of the days on which the Bishop resolves to assist at the Divine Offices in his cathedral, and of various confraternities at whose religious exercises he would be present as often as possible. Then come the regulations which he lays down for his conduct internally. As to study, he would take care to be able to learn something every day of a profitable kind and suitable to his profession. To this purpose he would generally devote the time between seven and nine o'clock in the morning; besides which he would have a book of devotion read for half an hour after supper, which might answer partly for study and partly for meditation. He would meditate for an hour every morning. Then follow resolutions about the presence of God, and about ejaculatory prayers (to which, by the way, he attached great importance, as an excellent means of making up for lost time, if any thing hindered the usual meditations). He goes on to fix his hours for saying the Divine Office: he would say Mass at nine o'clock daily; hear confessions every two or three days, and occasionally himself go to confession publicly in the church, by way of example; he would fast, besides the days commanded by the Church, every Friday and Saturday, and on all vigils of the feasts of Our Lady. Every year he would make a retreat of eight days, in which he would review his progress, confess his offences, confer with his confessor on his difficulties, make many prayers, especially mental, offer and cause to be offered many Masses to obtain from Almighty God the graces he required, and renew all the good purposes and designs with which Almighty God inspired him. The time he thought best for this retreat was the carnival; not only to avoid beholding the license to which the people gave way at that season, but, like our Lord and His holy precursor, to emerge from the desert to preaching and good works: but if there were hopes of withdrawing the people from their dissipation, then he would take some of the weeks between Easter and

Pentecost for the retreat, to have the advantage of the grace of those holy feasts, and because affairs were then less pressing. Such was his rule of life, which was signed by his director, Father John Forrier. But although he made out this exact distribution of time, as an arrangement to which he always aimed at conforming himself, still he did not allow it to entangle his conscience, or interfere with the service of his flock. He was too wise a man not to know that "the torrents of business," as he calls them in his letters, by which a bishop is overwhelmed, must often sweep away the best-devised regulation of hours; and that, on the other hand, nothing will be well done unless there is at least a constant effort to adhere to rule. By this means he kept clear both of scrupulosity and disorder.

His consecration took place on December 8, 1602, the feast of the Immaculate Conception, at the parish church of Thonon, one of the noblest of the lordships belonging to the house of Sales. A vast concourse of the most distinguished people from every part of Savoy were present at this joyful ceremonial. The mother of the Saint had taken care to have this church magnificently adorned; and she too had prepared by a retreat for this great day, expecting for herself an overflow of graces, when so much would be bestowed on the child of benediction whom she had offered to our Lord before he was born. The chief consecrating prelate was Vespasian Grimaldi, formerly Archbishop of Vienna; but who for many years had led a retired and charitable life at Evian, on the borders of the Lake of Geneva. The character of the ceremonial was felt by all to be pervaded by a supernatural sweetness. The countenance of Francis de Sales appeared radiant like an angel's; and he afterwards declared that he had beheld our Blessed Lady and the holy apostles Peter and Paul assisting him; and that at each step of the ceremony,—the imposition of hands, the unction, the conferring of the mitre, the gloves, the ring, and the cross,—he saw clearly and distinctly the Blessed Trinity working in

his soul the effects symbolised by those ceremonies. When the consecration was over, he returned to the castle of Sales, where he spent a few days more in retreat; and on Dec. 14th he made his solemn entry into his episcopal city of Annecy, where he was received by the authorities and the whole population with great rejoicings.

He had now entered on the career which made him what he is in the history of the Church, and previously to which, notwithstanding the great actions he had achieved, and the extensive influence he had acquired, the purpose for which such graces had been lavished upon him would not have been fulfilled. The rule of life, of which we have given an abstract, was carried out by him with that mingled good sense and gentleness which governed all his proceedings. He lived at Annecy in a hired house, preferring to do so from motives of humility, rather than to purchase one for himself. Afterwards, however, the President Favre, on leaving that city, presented him with the mansion he had himself lived in. Every thing in his establishment was simple, but still elegant; and, considering the very small revenues he had, which did not amount to more than 3680 fr. a year (not equal to 150*l.* of our money), his appointments were even magnificent. In this respect he was the greatest contrast to St. Charles Borromeo, whom he revered so much, and who, with a vast income, lived in the utmost external as well as internal austerity. However, although Francis de Sales thought it right to adopt a certain degree of dignity in his household economy, he kept for himself a little dark and poorly-furnished apartment, which he playfully called the room of "Francis," the others being the rooms of "the bishop." The house was the very abode of calmness and peace: it united the stillness and holiness of the monastery with the air of homeliness that became the palace of the bishop. He governed his household with that astonishing sweetness with which he did every thing, and of which he had spent many

years in the patient acquisition. There are beautiful instances of it as regards this part of his conduct; such as his kindly allowing his old preceptor, the Abbé Déage, who lived in his house, to reprove him, as if he were still his pupil. He secured, however, as exact an observance of his rules as could possibly have been obtained by the method of severity. Female servants he would not permit in his household, nor indeed any females to enter it, except in the gallery and reception-room: when urged to relax this rule, at least so far as to allow some aged and respectable woman to superintend the linen, he replied, that he would not permit even his own mother to live in his house; for though she was his mother, all the women who would be certain to come to see her were not.

The first business which Francis took in hand after he was settled at Annecy, was to establish a confraternity of Christian Doctrine, and to make catechetical instruction his strongest point. He opened it with solemn High Mass in the church of St. Dominic, and heard the classes himself every Sunday. A more interesting sight there could not be than to behold him, seated in front of the altar, teaching the little ones,—the girls on one side, and the boys on the other. He took the greatest pains with it, making Bellarmine's catechism his basis, and working it in every possible way with the most familiar explanations, repeating over and over again what he had said, till he was quite satisfied the children understood it. He encouraged them with prizes, such as medals, rosaries, and prayer-books; and very seldom used reproofs. The instruction ended with singing hymns in French, several of which, says our biographer, "were of his own composition." St. Francis, however, says, in the preface to his *Treatise on the Love of God*, in speaking of Desportes' metrical version of the Psalms, that he himself "had never so much as thought of this style of writing." He may not, however, have considered the hymns he had written for children worth mentioning as an ex-

ception to this. The catechetical instructions became very popular in Annecy, and grown-up people resorted to them in such numbers, that he was obliged first to open the side-chapels of the church of St. Dominic, and afterwards two other churches, to accommodate additional classes. Twice a year he made a festival for the children, and went through the city with them processionally, singing litany. The influence his kindness gained over them was such that he never came forth without the children crowding about from every nook and corner of the streets to receive his blessing or kiss his robe. He was followed by troops of them, so that his friends complained of it, as the disciples did to our Lord; and they received from the Holy bishop a similar answer: "Suffer them to come," he said; "they are my little people." He caused the priests to give catechetical instructions every Sunday throughout his diocese; and exhorted such priests as were without benefices to devote themselves to this duty, giving them letters signed by himself to authorise them to catechise with permission of the parish-priests.

He took immense pains to secure good priests for his parishes; and would fill up no vacancies except by a *concursus*, or examination, conducted by a council of his best and most learned ecclesiastics. He drew up for the use of his clergy an admirable set of instructions on the Sacrament of Penance, entitled *Avvertissements aux Confesseurs*, which had also a wide circulation in France and Italy; and he put forth an exact and well-devised ritual for the use of the diocese of Geneva, based on the Roman liturgy.

During this first year of his episcopate, his tact and wisdom were shown in a wonderful manner by the reform he effected in the abbey of Sixt, an Augustinian monastery among the mountains of Faucigny, which had fallen into such a state of relaxation that the abbot did not even know whether he was commendatory or titular, that is, whether he was or was not bound to keep the rules of his order; and the monks had no precise idea of



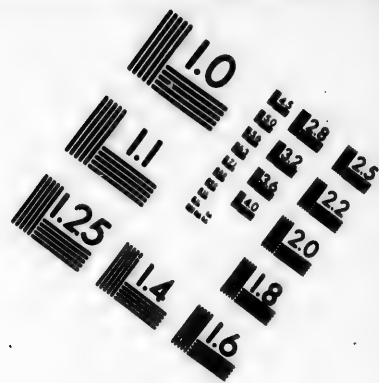
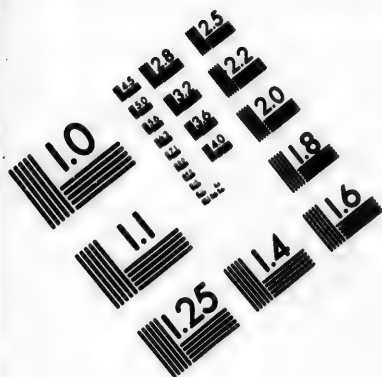
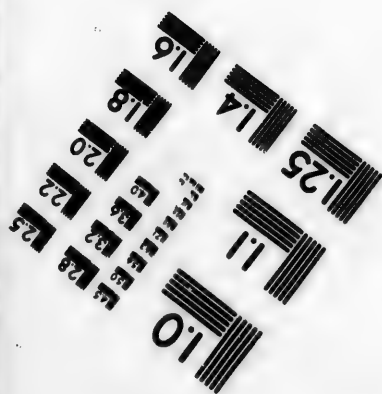
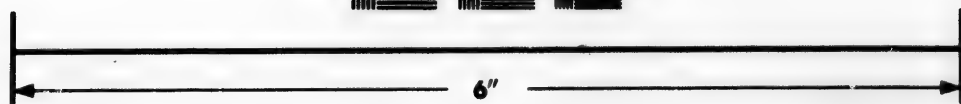
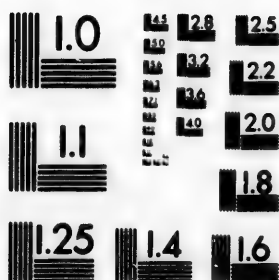


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the extent of their obligations. In spite of strong opposition on the part of the abbot, he gradually and gently re-established monastic discipline in the community; though, as we shall see, irregularity again crept in, and towards the close of his life he was obliged to renew his exertions to complete this reform.

On Oct. 2d, 1600, he opened his first diocesan synod, at which he established a variety of excellent rules for the government of the diocese; one of the most important of which was, to divide it into twenty districts, called *surveillances*. Over each of these he placed one of the most experienced of the parish-priests, whose duty it was to visit all the parishes of the surveillance once in six months; to hold a meeting of all the parish-priests twice a year; and to give a half-yearly report to the bishop of the exact state of every church, every parish, and of the conduct of each parish-priest. The result of this and of the other statutes he issued was, that he acquired the most perfect knowledge of his widely-extended diocese, and brought its administration to an extraordinary degree of perfection. It will be interesting here to mention the sources from which he may be supposed to have derived his views of the duties of a bishop. Having occasion, in 1603, to give his advice to a newly-consecrated bishop, he recommends him first of all, for his individual improvement, to study the works of Grenada, "as his second Breviary;" to read them "with reverence and devotion;" and to ruminate them chapter after chapter with much consideration and prayer. Next to Grenada, he advises the works of Stella and Arias, the Confessions of St. Augustine, Bellentani, a Capuchin writer, Costerus, the Spiritual Letters of Avila, and the Epistles of St. Jerome. In the conduct of affairs, he recommends Cardinal Tollet's Cases of Conscience, the Morals and Pastoral of St. Gregory, the Epistles and Books *de Consideratione* of St. Bernard; the *Stimulus Pastorum* of Bartholomew de Martyribus; the Decrees of the Church of Milan as indispensable; the Life of St. Charles Borromeo; and above all, he advises him to

have always in his hands the Council of Trent and its catechism.

Throughout this period, and indeed during all his episcopate, the affairs of Gex gave him a great deal of trouble; the policy of Henry IV., notwithstanding the favour with which he regarded Francis, and the promises the holy Bishop managed to extort from him, being very much influenced by a fear of offending his Protestant subjects and the neighbouring republic of Geneva. Hence it was with much difficulty and by slow degrees that Francis was enabled to reconstruct a certain number of parishes in that district.

CHAPTER VIII.

VISIT OF FRANCIS DE SALES TO DIJON—HIS DIRECTION OF JANE
FRANCES DE CHANTAL.

IN 1603, the *échevins*, or magistrates, of Dijon invites him to preach the Lent in that city; an invitation which he rather accepted, as it gave him the opportunity of adjusting some difficulties connected with the Church-property in Gex, which Henry IV., forgetting the grant he had already made of them for the endowment of the parishes, assigned to André Fremiot, councillor of the parliament of Dijon, whom he appointed Archbishop of Bourges. At Dijon, as at Paris, the preaching of Francis de Sales produced an impression unequalled in those times. The visit, however, led otherwise to results which constitute it the most important epoch of his life, and to which we shall find it necessary to devote considerable space of this outline.

Whilst he was preaching the Lent at Dijon in 1603, Francis de Sales first made the acquaintance of Jane Frances de Chantal, in connection with whom he afterwards founded the Order of Visitation, which is the most perfect reflex of his spirit; and the history of which, even after his death, may be said to be a continuation and development of his own. The characters and actions of the holy women who figure in its early history were so completely formed by the teaching and example of the Saint, that whoever wishes to understand him must study their biographies, of which there are such copious materials, as much as his. The smallest anecdote relating to them throws light on Francis; for they lived in his atmosphere, and, like Mary at the feet of Jesus, laid up in their hearts whatever he said. He founded the order in a twofold manner: first, by starting the idea of an institution so requisite as the

was in the Catholic Church; and secondly, by moulding and directing another mind of kindred heroism to carry out his idea. To us it appears that this circumstance throws his greatness into stronger relief than any thing else we have to tell of him. We judge best of the power of one mind by observing the calibre of other minds which it is able to influence and control. For instance, in the history of this world, great as the first Napoleon is if considered by himself, he becomes far greater when we consider that his marshals and dependent kings were themselves great men, and yet manipulated by him as his instruments. In the rise of the Visitation, we see the wonderful sight of the gradual formation, and, so to speak, the spiritual education, of one great saint, to execute a work projected by another. We have the whole process completely before us from the first; and it must not be supposed that the case is less extraordinary because a feminine mind might easily be captivated and subdued by the naturally superior reason of a man. Jane Frances was one of those women of whom French history affords so many examples, who in clearness of intellect, strength of will, and greatness of character, were fully on a level with the loftiest minds of the stronger sex. As far as the possession of these characteristics goes, she might have ruled a kingdom; and her letters show a grace and an elegance, both of thought and style, that prove her powers needed only to have had a worldly instead of a spiritual direction, to have equalled in composition such a writer as Madame de Sevigné, who was her granddaughter. The lives of these two saints are so closely associated, that it is difficult to view them apart; and from the time they met to the death of Francis, whoever would be the complete biographer of the one, must also record, almost equally at large, the actions of the other. Both of them had precisely the same settled object of life; and the one was far more the product and expression of the mind of the other, than the most perfect picture is the image of the artist's soul: for in the

picture the artist himself alone strives to embody his conceptions; the picture is inanimate, and cannot co-operate with the will of its inventor. But in exact proportion to the desire of the holy prelate to train and fashion the noble soul Almighty God intrusted to his care, so that she might best fulfil the work for which she was designed, did that soul of herself co-operate with his purposes, eagerly drink in the lessons of his wisdom, and strive to become the perfect copy of his saintliness. But the brief limits of the present sketch will not allow us to delay. We proceed to give an outline of the earlier years of Jane Frances, and of the origin and leading features of the order of the Visitation.

Jane Frances de Chantal was the daughter of Benigne Fremiot, president of the parliament of Dijon, an illustrious member of one of the best families of the *noblesse de la robe*, which was held in such consideration in old France. She was born in 1572, and at an early age married the Baron de Chantal, a nobleman of Burgundy. Their married life affords a beautiful picture of domestic society among the country noblesse of that period in France. The feudal manners are still visible; but softened by modern refinement, and yet more by the gentleness and diligence of the true Catholic wife. Although in such high life, Madame de Chantal dressed very plainly, only in linen and woollen, except on festivals, when she wore the more splendid attire she had brought with her to her husband's house. And yet, when she wore nothing but camlet and serge, "it was with such neatness, grace, and propriety, that she looked a hundred times better than many others who ruin their families to wear head-dresses." She rose very early in the morning, and had completed all her household arrangements before her husband was up. She had the family chapel repaired, and Mass said in it regularly; always taking special care, if her husband had to go out hunting early on a summer's morning, to make him and his attendants hear it before starting. She destroyed any bad books she found about the house;

her own usual reading was the *Lives of the Saints*, and sometimes the *Annals of France*, or some other useful history. Her charity to the poor was unbounded, and known for miles round the castle, especially during a terrible famine, when she distributed food to them daily. A barrel of corn and a little rye, which at one time was all she had left in the granaries, was miraculously multiplied for six months. The fact was related to her biographer by some of the servants who knew of it, and also by Mad. de Chantal herself, when her nuns afterwards entreated her to tell them the whole story. She always ascribed the miracle to the devotion of a holy servant of hers, named Dame Jeanne, in whose prayers she placed great confidence. A very pleasing instance of that feudal tinge to which we referred above, occurs in the anecdote of her releasing, during the night, peasants whom her husband had imprisoned in the damp dungeons of the castle, he, apparently, having what the good Baron Bradwardine called the right of "pit and gallows." Very early in the morning, before M. de Chantal was up, she would cause the prisoners to retire to their dismal quarters, and then beg her husband to set them off, which he generally did at her gentle entreaties. She scarcely ever changed her servants; and her house, says the biographer, "was the abode of peace, of honour, of politeness, of Christian piety, and of a truly noble and innocent cheerfulness."

After living thus happily for some years, Madame de Chantal was suddenly bereaved of the husband she loved so well. The baron happened to go out shooting one morning with a relative of his, M. d'Alzury; and having occasion to creep through some bushes in pursuit of his game, M. d'Alzury, at a distance, imagining it was a deer, drew his arquebuss in that direction (for guns were as yet rarely used), and M. de Chantal immediately fell mortally wounded. He survived a few days, and expired in a most devout and Christian manner, wholly forgiving the friend who had unintentionally caused his death, and charging his widow to take no

steps against him. Madame de Chantal, who was passionately attached to her husband, was overwhelmed with the most agonising grief, which continued for a long time. This was an immense sacrifice, and other trials were at hand. After a short visit to her father's at Dijon, she and her four children removed to Monthelon, the seat of her father-in-law, the old Baron de Chantal. He was seventy-five years of age, and of a most severe and repulsive temper; add to which, he was completely under the control of an ill-conditioned servant, to whom he had intrusted the whole management of his house and affairs to such an extent, that Madame de Chantal, admirable as were her business talents and skill in the government of a family, was allowed no sort of authority in the place, not so much as to give a drink to a messenger without permission. This woman also had five children, who had the run of the house, and were put on a level with those of Madame de Chantal. She set the mira. of the weak and irritable old man against his holy daughter-in-law; and amongst them, the latter led such a life, that her biographer calls it a purgatory of seven years and a half. Notwithstanding, she repaid good for evil, and took the trouble to teach the children of the housekeeper to read, and even sometimes washed and dressed them with her own hands. She was, however, allowed to continue her good offices to the poor; and kept a store-room in the house, appropriated to her medicines, ointments, and other remedies, so neatly arranged, that it became a proverb throughout the country to say of any thing in particularly good order, *C'est propre et bien rangé, comme la boutique de Madame de Chantal.*

A mind thus, like Madame de Chantal's, corresponding with divine grace, could not fail to be led on further; and resplendent as her virtues were, she was as yet only at the commencement of her career. Yet, as the glories of the natural day are prefigured by the early rays which gild the distant mountain-summits, there were in her mind prophetic instincts which foretold

what was to come, and which received years after their fulfilment and completion. She was haunted with an ardent, inextinguishable longing to find some wise director who could tell her certainly what was the will of God with regard to her, and whose counsels she might follow with unhesitating obedience. She had a vision of a very remarkable kind, in which it was not only shown to her that her wish would be accomplished, but she even beheld the very person who was destined to lead her through the difficult paths which she was to traverse. One day, whilst riding in the fields, she saw standing at the foot of a hill a man of amiable and august appearance, habited in ecclesiastical dress, and holding a breviary in his hand. At the same moment it was revealed to her that she now beheld the director whom God intended for her. Long after this, on the first occasion when she saw Francis de Sales at Dijon, she recognised in him the very features of the person she had seen in her vision. Other revelations or supernatural anticipations began to visit her. Thus it was conveyed to her mind, that "through the gate of St. Claude" she was to find peace and comfort. We shall see, as we go on, what those words meant, which she knew not at the time. Again, on another occasion, in the chapel of Bourbilly, she saw a brilliant array of devout virgins and widows, and was told that of that heavenly company she was to be the mother. The first of these prophetic dawnings of the future was so vivid that, thirty-five years after, she remembered it as distinctly as if she even then saw it with her bodily eyes. What makes all of these the more striking is, that about the same period Francis de Sales, with whom she was then quite unacquainted, had revelations of an analogous description, in which he beheld in prophetic vision the appearance of the holy foundress, and received by divine illumination the idea of the order which he originated.

After passing a long time in a state which would have been one of feverish anxiety and uncertainty, but

for that deep tranquillity which ever reigns in the inmost heart of the saints, Madame de Chantal was at length induced to place herself under the direction of a Capuchin monk, a good and learned man, but who proved himself singularly wanting in that wisdom and discretion which is required for the conduct of souls. He began by making her take four vows : first, ever to obey him implicitly ; second, never to change him ; third, to keep secret all he told her ; and fourth, not to confer about her conscience with any one but himself. His method of direction was equally ill-advised. He burdened her with all sorts of observances, particular devotions, prayers, fasts, vigils, which kept her continually hampered, and deprived her of all the liberty of spirit essential to advancement in the spiritual life. She had had from the first a secret repugnance against taking him for her director ; and his narrow, harassing system, based as it was on a principle which no confessor had a right to dictate to his penitent, kept her soul in a state of disquiet which, added to all her other crosses, was indeed a furnace fit to try the purest gold. These very trying circumstances lasted for about three years ; for Jane Frances, with that prudence which belongs to the saints, knew that we ought to be in no hurry to change any state in which we find ourselves placed, and which is not sinful. However painful it might be, she patiently endured it, till she was quite clear that it was the will of God it should be changed, and changed, as is most usual where steps are taken agreeably to that will, not by any one sudden and violent act, but gradually and sweetly ; one event leading to, and as it were melting into another, like the colours in a beautiful and harmonious landscape. The beginning of her release from this captivity was occasioned by Francis de Sales' visit to Dijon in 1603. He was preaching the Lent in the cathedral of that city, and Madame de Chantal attended his sermons. She recognised in him the very person whom, years before, she had seen in the vision we have related, as the appointed guide whom Almighty God intended to take charge

of her soul. Francis noticed her particularly, as she sat in front of the pulpit;—a lady of that grace and dignity which, in those days, distinguished her rank from others as much almost as if they were different classes of the creation, and yet habited in a widow's garb of the humblest materials. On his return to the palace, he inquired of his host who she was; and the holy prelate was amused to find she was the sister of the Archbishop of Bourges, and the daughter of the President Fremiot, of whom he asked the question. He seems at once to have singled her out, with that unerring eye by which saints know who are best qualified to aid them in carrying out their great purposes. On the very first occasion on which he met her at the archbishop's, he tried her spirit of obedience by hinting to her to leave off, one after another, some of those ornaments which, though dressed in the gravest habit belonging to a lady of her rank, Madame de Chantal still retained. She immediately and joyfully complied. The entanglement of the vows which her unwise director had induced her to take, checked the ardent wish she almost directly entertained of opening to this wise and holy adviser the state of her conscience, and of asking his heaven-inspired counsels. Could any cross be imagined more painful than for a holy soul to be in doubt of her course,—to see before her, and to recognise, the person who had the clue to all her difficulties, and yet to be bound down and prisoned-in with a fourfold vow taken in obedience? It might have been thought that nothing could break through such a superincumbent weight on the mind; yet, by the grace of Almighty God, the evil worked its own remedy. The director happened to be absent from the city; though, as if to demonstrate his unfitness for such an office as guiding a great soul in its way to heaven, he had left a person in charge to watch his penitent, lest she should have recourse to any one but himself. Madame de Chantal, however, being under extreme anxiety and distress, did what the inspiration of Heaven, as well as that liberty which no director could lawfully restrain,

authorised her in doing; she had an interview with Francis, in which, although hindered from speaking half what she wished by the terrors of her law, she yet to some extent relieved her mind, and instantly felt she had done right by the tranquillity which came upon her spirit from the wise advice he gave, and from that atmosphere of peace which reigned around him. Before his departure from Dijon she confessed to him, and received the holy communion at his hands. This she seems to have been allowed to do; what her director had attempted to prevent was not her occasionally going to another confessor,—for Father de Villars, rector of the Jesuits at Dijon, was her confessor,—but her placing herself under any direction but his own. The change of directors was not accomplished without a good deal of delay. No state, not unlawful in itself, ought to be changed without a great deal of consideration and prayer. Mad. de Chantal knew this well, and would doubtless have endured throughout her whole life the martyrdom of having a director who did not understand her, if she had known this was the will of God. Francis, moreover, was eminently hostile to any thing like haste or flurry; his favourite word was *pedetentim*, “by degrees;” “soon enough if well enough.” His method in this case, accordingly, was not to make any violent break in the existing state of things, but to allow one state to merge into another, making no visible alteration till the will of God was completely ascertained after long-continued prayer; in which he secured, according to his wont, the co-operation of others.

On his departure from Dijon, Madame de Chantal remained in tranquillity, abandoning herself entirely into God's hands. However, on Whitsun-eve, forty days after he had gone, she was suddenly assailed by a storm of spiritual anguish, her soul being divided between an earnest longing to place herself under the guidance of Francis, and a scrupulous fear of leaving her former director. Father de Villars, whom she consulted, with great decision advised the former course. “It is the

will of God," he said, "that you place yourself under the direction of the Bishop of Geneva; he, and not the guide you at present follow, is adapted for you; he has the spirit of God and of the Church, and Divine Providence wills something great from you in giving that terrestrial seraph for your conductor." Words like these showed what an extraordinary impression the holy Bishop produced on those who saw him. Father de Villars, years after, in writing to Francis de Sales, said that God had given him "so strong an impulse to assure Madame de Chantal that it was by the channel of his lips that Heaven willed to give her the waters of the Samaritaness, that had the angels come to dissuade him from this, he did not think they could have succeeded, because the impression came from the King of the angels." However, she remained under her first director for a few months, and even, under obedience, renewed the vow he indiscreetly exacted from her. These trials at length came to an end. On St. Bartholomew's day, 1604, the two saints met at St. Claude,—thus fulfilling the vision in which it had been revealed to Mad. de Chantal, that by "the gate of St. Claude" she was to find rest; though both were brought thither for other apparently accidental occasions. Madame de Chantal with great simplicity and candour revealed her whole soul to Francis. He listened attentively, made no answer whatever, and thus they parted. Early next morning he called upon her, and said that, after having spent the whole night in prayer and reflection, he had concluded it was God's will he should undertake her direction, that her four vows were of no avail but to trouble her conscience, and that his long delay was only caused by his wish to know thoroughly the will of God, and to have nothing done in the affair except by His hand. "I heard him," said Mad. de Chantal in after-times to her nuns, "as if a voice from heaven had spoken to me; he seemed to be in a ravishment, so recollected was he; and he kept seeking for his words one after another, as having a difficulty in speaking." She then made her

general confession, and a vow of obedience to him; and he wrote her out a method for passing the day devoutly, and changed her manner of meditation, which had been harassing and difficult. "From this day (it was the festival of St. Louis, August 25) she began to enter into the interior repose of the children of God, into a great interior liberty, and was attracted to a sort of prayer, altogether cordial and intimate, which leads to a holy and respectful familiarity of soul with the heavenly Sponsor."

The letters which Francis wrote to Mad. de Chantal, and which from this period form so large a part of his correspondence, are, as we need hardly tell our readers, a repertory of ascetical and practical wisdom, such as it would be hardly possible to find equalled in the whole body of ecclesiastical literature. The rules of life which he proposes to her, and from time to time modifies as she needs it, the continual application and development of two or three grand maxims, the prudence with which difficulties and temptations are constantly met, and the rich abundance with which traits of personal character come out, and the great and little trials of domestic life in the Catholic circles which surrounded the two Saints (for, as we shall see, their families became connected),—all give a wonderful interest to these beautiful old French letters.

In May 1605, Mad. de Chantal paid a visit of four days at the château of Sales, where she again had an opportunity of conferring with Francis on the state of her soul. On this, as on the former occasion, he drew out for her a set of rules regulating the whole method of her life, marking out her devotions, fixing her hours, and suggesting the principles on which she should encounter temptations. When she returned home, she almost immediately commenced the system he had prescribed to her. We here set down briefly her order of life, as she copied with the greatest exactness the idea of perfection which he suggested to her, as a lady still living in the world, and having all the cares of a family

upon her. She rose every day at five, and earlier in summer, lighted her candle when it was needed, and went to her oratory, where she spent one hour in mental prayer, and said her daily prayers, after which she completed her toilette without attendance, and without a fire, no matter how cold it might be. She then heard her children say their prayers, and afterwards went to bid good morning to her cross-grained old father-in-law, and assisted him to dress, if he was in the humour to allow her. She heard Mass every day, and on Saturdays had a special Mass said, which, with Francis' permission, she had vowed to the Blessed Virgin. A regular part of her daily occupation was to teach her children, and those of the housekeeper, from whom she had to suffer so much, their lessons and catechism. Te spiritual reading for herself she devoted half-an-hour a day. Each day she made a spiritual retreat into one of the Wounds of our Lord, re-entering into it especially in a short recollection before supper-time. She then said her chaplet, which, under a vow, she persevered in throughout her life. In the evening, after supper, if there was no company, and the old baron allowed her, she assembled the household, and read some profitable instruction. She ended the day by saying with her children and attendants the Litany of our Lady, and a *De profundis* for the repose of the soul of her deceased husband. Then came the examen of conscience, and the recommendation to the angel-guardian; after which she gave holy water and the blessing to her children. She still remained at prayer for about half-an-hour, concluding all with reading the subject for the next day's meditation. Her favourite devotion was to visit in spirit each portion of the Church, congratulating that which is triumphant in heaven; supplicating for the militant Church on earth; and applying for the Church suffering in purgatory her suffrages, prayers, and indulgences. The above-mentioned practice of retiring each day into one of the Five Blessed Wounds, to which she added the scars left by the Crown of Thorns,

was a source of special grace to her. "It gave her a spiritual view of God in all things, and a holy indifference, so as in all diversities of creatures, affairs, and events, to find her one only Good." Her daily reading at this time was the Exposition of the Gospels by the Carthusian Ludolfus, called "the great *Vita Christi*;" she also was particularly fond of the metrical version of the Psalms by Philippe Desportes, abbot of Tiron, from which Francis de Sales continually quotes in his *Treatise on the Love of God*.

She early began to entertain an ardent desire to leave the world, and addict herself to some religious institute. That of Mount Carmel suggested itself; and she often had ladies who wished to join that order staying in her house. The holy director, however, following his usual method, by no means encouraged a hasty decision. He implored the Divine light at the holy Sacrifice, and had prayers offered up by devout persons. All he could say at first was, that one day or other she should quit every thing; but whether to enter religion or not, he left undetermined. He said that he had never placed his own inclination in a state of such indifference as in that question; but, so far, "the 'yes' could not fix itself in his heart, and the 'no' was present there with much firmness." This state of uncertainty went on till the Whitsuntide of 1607, when Madame de Chantal went to Annecy to advise with him on her spiritual affairs. After keeping her some days in doubt, he tried her obedience by proposing, one after another, several religious orders and institutes for her to enter upon; she humbly accepted each apparent change of purpose he expressed; and at last, when he had satisfied himself of her submissiveness to the will of God, he unfolded to her very fully the idea of the Order afterwards called by the name of the Visitation, which he had matured in his mind, and in the foundation of which he knew Almighty God intended her to co-operate with him.

It will be sufficient in this place to state briefly the

principal objects of this Order, which we shall afterwards develop when we have gone through the most interesting points connected with the history of its foundation. Francis intended it to supply what had hitherto been a deficiency in the conventual institutions. All that had hitherto existed were such as the delicate and wealthy could with difficulty enter there were severe fasts or vigils, or other corporal austerities, which no person of a feeble constitution could undertake without danger. Thus a whole class of the most devout and lowly-minded women were excluded from all hope of the religious state, for which otherwise they might be excellently qualified. Francis de Sales, therefore, projected such an institution as would welcome the infirm, the sickly, or the aged, as well as the robust; which would make up, by works of charity and the exercise of prayer, for those kinds of self-denial which the weakness of their health would not permit. Madame de Chantal joyfully acquiesced in the proposition, and felt that unmistakable serenity of soul which accompanies any great step in life taken in perfect accordance with the Divine will. "I suddenly felt," she said, "a great interior correspondence, with a sweet satisfaction and light, which assured me that this was the will of God; which I had never felt as to other propositions, although my whole soul was entirely submitted to them." There were, however, two grand difficulties in the design,—one, the family ties with which Madame de Chantal was entangled. She was a widow, with four children, still quite young; and there were also the two old men, her father and father-in-law: the former with his whole soul wrapped up in his admirable daughter; the latter in the helplessness and peevishness of his decline, requiring, perhaps more than ever, her tender and all-forgiving care. And next, there was the necessity of establishing the first house of the new institute at Annecy, where it would be under the eye of its holy founder. To go to such a distance from her old provincial home, would seem to

all Madame de Chantal's relatives a thing both cruel to her family and extravagant in itself.

What seemed at first a great misfortune, brought about the solution to these difficulties. After a visit to Annecy in 1607, Madame de Chantal brought away with her Mademoiselle Jeanne, the youngest sister of our Saint, to stay with her in Burgundy. This young lady was only fifteen, and exceedingly accomplished and interesting. Francis had baptised her himself, and loved her with the affection of a father as well as a brother. He reckoned much on what she was likely to do for the glory of God. However, she had not been long at Madame de Chantal's before she was carried off by a fever. The letter Francis wrote to the saintly baroness on receiving this sad news affords so touching and beautiful a picture of Catholic family-life, that we must translate a part of it: "What, my dear daughter," he asks, "is it not reasonable that the most holy will of God be fulfilled, as well in things that we cherish as in others? But I must needs hasten to tell you that my good mother has drunk this chalice with an altogether Christian constancy; and her virtue, of which I had always had a good opinion, has far exceeded my estimation. On Sunday morning she sent to fetch my brother the canon; and because she had observed him very sad, and all the other brothers also. on the evening before, she began to say to him: 'I dreamed all the night that my daughter Jeanne was dead; tell me, I pray you, is it not true?' My brother, who waited for my arrival to tell it to her, seeing this was a good opening to offer her the cross, 'Mother,' says he, 'it is true,' and did not say any thing more; for he had not the power of saying another word. And, 'God's will be done,' says my good mother; and she wept abundantly for a space of time, and then calling her servant Mark: 'I will rise,' says she, 'to go and pray God in the chapel for my poor daughter.' And immediately she did as she had said: not a single word of impatience, nor a single disquieted twinkling of the eye, a thousand blessings upon

Gon, and a thousand resignations to I is will. Never did I see a more tranquil sorrow; it was a wonder to see so many tears; but all this by simple tender gushes of the heart, without any sort of violence; yet for all that it was her dear child. Well now, this mother of mine, ought I not to love her well?" Another letter brings out no less beautifully his own feelings on this bereavement: "You may think," he says, "my dear daughter, how heartily I loved this little girl. I had begotten her for her Saviour, for I had baptised her with my own hand, above fourteen years ago; she was the first creature on whom I exercised my priestly office. I was her spiritual father; and I promised myself much to make something good of her one day; and what rendered her very dear to me (but I speak the truth) was that she was yours. But nevertheless, my dear daughter, in the midst of my heart of flesh, which has had so many throbbings on account of this death, I perceive very sensibly a certain sweet tranquillity, and a certain sweet repose of my spirit in Divine Providence, which diffuses on my soul a great contentment in these sorrows." Then he goes on to give directions for his sister's funeral; he sends Madame de Chantal an escutcheon of his sister's armorial bearings, "to please her," and agrees that services be celebrated at the place where her body reposed; "but without great pomp, only what Christian custom required;" for he loved simplicity in death as well as in life. "We will pray God for her soul; and we gladly render her her little honours." Madame de Chantal, as might be supposed, took this death deeply to heart; indeed such had been her anguish during the illness of poor Jeanne, that she prayed God rather to take herself, or one of her own children, than her. When all was over, she made a vow to give to the house of Sales one of her daughters, in the place of this one who had died whilst under her roof. Whilst she made this vow a sense of consolation came over her mind, and she perceived that it was the means Providence had chosen to facilitate her retirement to Annecy. Her daughter was



very young, and she would have to accompany her there, and would thus become disconnected from the ties of home. It took much trouble to reconcile her relatives to this match; the venerable President Fremiot being greatly attached to his grand-daughter, and unwilling to part with her from his house, although he revered the name of Francis de Sales, and valued the nobility of his illustrious house. On the other side, overtures had, some time before, been made to Madame de Chantal by the good Madame de Boisy, who had set her heart on her son, the Baron de Thorens, marrying a daughter of Madame de Chantal. The youthful pair were in fact affianced in the autumn of 1608; and a twelvemonth after, on Oct. 16, 1609, they were married at Monthelon, the residence of the old Baron de Chantal. Madame de Boisy died before this union, to which she had looked forward with all the maternal pleasure of her simple and loving heart, had taken place. She died rather suddenly of a paralytic seizure, but retained her senses all nearly the last. Her dying moments were quite in keeping with the tranquil beauty which reigns throughout the whole history of the Saint and his household. She held the cross in her trembling hands, and kissed it even when her eyesight was gone. When Francis arrived at the bedside of his expiring mother, she knew him; and although oppressed with blindness and lethargy, she caressed him much, and said, "This is my son and my father,—this one." Charles Augustus de Sales, in his exquisite life of the Saint, describes the last scene with singular sweetness of expression. "At last," says he, "on the first day of the month of March, she yielded up to God her beautiful soul, gently and tranquilly, and with a greater constancy and beauty than perhaps she had ever had, remaining one of the finest corpses it was possible to behold, and exhaling no evil odour. The great prelate had then courage, after having given her his holy benediction, to close her lips and eyes, and to give her the last kiss of peace. After

which his heart swelled very much, and he wept over that mother more than he had ever done since he was a churchman; but it was without spiritual bitterness, as he afterwards protested. He rendered her the funeral honours and duties, and her body was placed to rest in the tomb of Sales in the church of Thorens."

As we are writing the life of Francis de Sales, and not that of Mde. de Chantal, constantly as the incidents of both are interwoven with each, we must necessarily pass over much of the latter on which it would be pleasing to dwell. In this place we need only add, that the history of Mde. de Chantal's external life, whilst she remained in the world, is a perfect study for those of her class,—ladies, namely, whose resources and leisure enable them to devote much of their time to the relief of the poor. The whole method she adopted, the sweetness and kindness she displayed in visiting them, attending those afflicted with sores so terrible that even to read of them would sicken the delicacy of many a sensitive person, cleaning and mending their clothes, washing and laying out the dead,—all was done well. And all this time she was still afflicted by the great domestic cross of the tyrannical and upstart housekeeper whom we have mentioned. One anecdote on this subject is in the very spirit of the teaching of Francis de Sales. In the hearing of Mde. de Chantal some one said that when the old baron was dead, they would cut off this woman's nose, and drag her into the ditch. "No," said the noble-minded lady, "I will be her safeguard; if God makes use of her to impose a cross upon me, why should I wish her ill?" One of her methods in visiting the sick was to imagine she was on pilgrimage. She would say to her attendants: "We are going to make a little pilgrimage; we are going to visit our Lord on the Mount of Calvary, in the Garden of Olives, or at the Sepulchre." Whilst thus devoted to the life of perfection, she took excellent care of her domestic affairs; and managed the interests and fortunes of her children just as well, and far better, than if she had

been devoted to the world. She also did not neglect the usual elegant tasks of devout ladies of her rank, such as working ornaments for the altars of the neighbouring churches. On one occasion she spun some serge to make a vestment for Francis de Sales, and had it dyed violet. The manner in which he acknowledges this gift, is a remarkable example of the way in which he worked up the commonest incidents into devotional lessons. She had asked him to give the value of it to the poor; he waives this as a sort of scrupulosity: she was quite right in working for herself or her friends at leisure hours, but she must not feel herself under an obligation to give an equivalent sum to the poor; it would interfere with that holy liberty which must prevail every where. Then, if he were to pay the value of it to the poor, he asks, with elegant raillery, how was he to estimate the value? If he was to give a sum equal to what he thought the value, it would ruin him. The vestment had given him a thousand glad thoughts; and one of them was when he wore it in a procession in the Octave of Corpus Christi. "Do you see," he says, "I adored Him whom I was bearing; and it came into my heart that He was the true *Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world*. O Holy and Divine Lamb,—this is what I said,—how wretched am I without Thee! Alas, I am not clad, save in Thy wool, which covers my misery before the face of Thy Father. Upon this thought, behold it is Isaias who saith that our Lord, in His Passion, was *dumb as a lamb before his shearer*. And what is that divine fleece, but the merit, but the example, but the mysteries of the Cross? It seems to me, then, that the Cross is the fair distaff of the holy Spouse of the Canticles, of that devout Sunamite; the wool of the Incarnate Lamb is precious fastened to it,—that merit, that example, that mystery." Then he advises her to spin continually on this distaff the threads of holy aspirations, drawing from the spindle of her heart that white and delicate wool; and the robes made from it would

defend her from confusion in the day of her death. "I wished you thereupon blessings a thousand-fold; and that, at the great day of judgment, we might all find ourselves well-clad, some in the episcopal raiment others in widowhood, or in the wedded state; others in the garb of Capuchins; others Jesuits; others vine-dressers; but every habit made of the same white and red wool, which are the colours of the Spouse."

On the day after the marriage at Monthelon, Francis de Sales, the President Fremiot, and the Archbishop of Bourges, held a sort of council to decide upon the vocation of Madame de Chantal. When invited by them to explain her views, she showed with such clearness the good order in which she would leave her affairs on quitting the world, and the excellent arrangements she had made for the education of her children, who might even be brought up under her own eye in the event of the institution being established at Annecy, that, deeply as the sacrifice was felt by her father, he could not but recognise the finger of God in the design which she was undertaking. He gave his consent; and after a few hours' delay, she finally parted with her relations. The separation was unusually agonising, in proportion to the extraordinary love and reverence with which she had inspired them all; but having heroically overcome these last trials, she proceeded to Annecy, where, on Trinity Sunday, June 6th, which was also the Feast of St. Claude, the new institute, called at first that of the Ladies of St. Mary, and afterwards the Order of the Visitation of our Lady the most glorious Virgin Mary, was solemnly opened by its holy patriarch. There were at first three Sisters, Madame de Chantal herself, Charlotte de Bréchar, a young lady of noble birth from the province of Nivernois, whose delicate health had obliged her to leave the order of Mount Carmel, and Marie-Jacqueline Favre, a daughter of the President Favre, Francis's ancient friend. To them was added a lay-sister, as *tourière*, Anne Jacqueline Coste, a humble and good soul, who had been a

servant in a hotel in Geneva, having taken that place from a wish to serve the ecclesiastics and other Catholics who had occasion to resort to that heretical city. We shall attempt in the following chapter to give the reader a more detailed description of the purpose and organisation of the new Order.

CHAPTER II.

ORGANIZATION OF THE ORDER OF THE VISITATION.

THE idea of the Order of the Visitation seems to have originated partly in the circumstances of the times, partly from the character of Francis himself. A great change had indeed come over the world since the days when St. Antony assembled his thousands of hermits in the deserts of Egypt, or St. Bernard retired from the feudal castle to the unreclaimed solitudes of Cîteaux. The sternness of the feudal world required a corresponding sternness in the discipline of that life which those aimed at who left it, and the saint of the middle ages bore a certain analogy to the mail-clad knight. But a revolution in the whole system of the monastic life of the middle ages had been brought about by St. Ignatius. It came upon the world like an original and fertile discovery, that the mortification of the will may be turned to as great and even more extensive account than the mortification of the body. Very few constitutions indeed could sustain the tremendous discipline of the Cistercian fast; and in our own times we believe it has been ascertained that out of a community consisting of twenty or thirty, there are scarce six who are not obliged to avail themselves of dispensations. No dispensation is required in a system which is based on the mortification of the will. In such a system the most delicate can be as perfect as the strongest; corporeal mortifications must, moreover, in every case arrive at a speedy limit, whilst the occasions of every moment of conscious existence might, if required, be turned into mortifications of the will. There is also another reason why, in modern times, the latter, as a spiritual method, is superior to the former. As cultivation advances, temptations become much less simple, or belong more to the intellect or to the heart than to

the senses. Rude and savage natures are tempted by wealth and indulgence, whilst the more refined organization of a highly-educated mind is more apt to give way to pride, to a refined melancholy, or to a morbid propensity to look in upon itself and analyse its own action; in a word, the ancient or simple age is tempted by that which is without, the cultivated, or modern age, by that which is within. The special remedy for the former would consist in external suffering, in stern fasts, in long vigils, in severe penances; the remedy for the latter in the perpetual subjection of the individual to the will of a superior. As soon as the idea we have attempted to develop had been enunciated to the world, it of course more or less affected the rules of every new religious institute; and we shall be enabled to trace its presence, to a very considerable extent, in the constitutions of the Visitation. The kindly nature of Francis de Sales, and that special tenderness with which he regarded the infirm or the afflicted; and again, that preference which he seems always to have had for what he calls the little virtues which grow at the foot of the cross, were another important element of the institution which he founded. His system as a confessor had gradually formed many characters in the high society of France and Savoy, who required the formation of a new order to give them scope and operation. They were ladies, who to the courtly graces of an earlier age added that intellectual culture which reached its highest perfection in the reign of Louis XIV. It was evident that for characters like these the simplicity of the Franciscan or the Dominican rule required considerable modifications; the mode of life which, under his direction, Jane Frances de Chantal had adopted in the world, must of itself have suggested to him the idea of utilising it, of turning it to account in such a manner as to act, not only on her immediate circle, but on society generally; and, as we have seen, she was surrounded by many friends, who emulated her virtues, and were ready to follow where she led. As may perhaps be said of every

great movement, she might be compared to the beautiful crest of the wave; higher, indeed, and more resplendent than the other drops which formed it, but of the same material. Just as in Spain, before the Society of Jesus was instituted, Avila had conceived a very similar idea, which he heroically sacrificed when he beheld it mirrored in the more capacious soul of Ignatius, so there were in France holy and humble souls, which were indeed akin to this great foundress, and which, had she been absent, one might imagine would have been equal to a similar work; such was Madame d'Auxerre, of whom we know little, except that people said she was in Lyons what Madame de Chantal was in Annecy; such were many of the first Sisters of the Visitation, Mademoiselle Favre, Mademoiselle de Bréhard, the venerable Marie Aimée de Blonay, and others of the same community, whose lives constitute one of the richest and most beautiful chapters in that most interesting study—the Catholic memoirs of France. But with all this abundant material before him, there was one difficulty, which on the old system could not have been met: all of these ladies had been delicately reared in the highest French refinement of the day; very many of them were feeble in health and constitution; if, therefore, the religious life was to be precisely that of the daughters of St. Catherine or St. Clare, all this material would seem to have been, not indeed thrown away, but planted in a soil where it could not fructify and spread abroad its branches. Here then the great discovery made by St. Ignatius seemed precisely what was needed to meet the emergency; it was possible to devise a mode of life such as those most tenderly brought up and most infirm in health could undertake, the perfection of which should nevertheless not fall short of that of the most austere orders of earlier times. We now come to a fourth element in the constitution Francis had projected,—this was a certain reminiscence of the primitive life of the early Christians. In the early Christian Church religious orders of women were not cloistered; though

set apart to God, and living a life of the strictest seclusion, they still remained under the roof of the family. The Sisters of the Visitation, though strictly nuns, and living in a convent, were also, in their original system, not cloistered; that is to say, a certain section of the religious went out, as the Sisters of Mercy and Charity do now, to visit the sick and destitute. Another point of difference was, that originally they took only what are called the simple, and not the solemn vows. Under the simple vows, they had the power of returning to the world, if dispensed, for sufficient reasons, by their lawful superior; under the solemn vows this liberty would of course be impossible. The primitive idea of the Visitation was thus only a step beyond that of the third orders; the third orders gave a rule, but often left their members in the world; the Visitation removed them from the world, but did not establish that abrupt separation from it which characterises other religious institutes. In this respect it bore an obvious resemblance to the institute of the Oratory; for which as we have already seen, Francis had a great admiration, and the spirit of which may be traced in many details of the constitutions which he gave to this order.

This original idea, however, in a few years underwent a great and vital alteration. The Archbishop of Lyons, Denis de Marquemont, when a house of the institute was being founded in the capital city of his diocese, urged very strongly on Francis the prudence of bringing the Visitation into the category of the regular monastic orders, that is, of establishing the cloister, and substituting the solemn for the simple vows. His view was, that however useful the comparatively lax system might be, so long as the early fervour of a newly-established order remained, it would be certain to grow into abuses as soon as that fervour began to diminish. It is evident that this suggestion tended completely to change the features of the structure as it came from Francis's hand. His object was of one kind, the purely monastic system was of another; the

latter might be much greater, but it was not precisely the same; for example, the establishment of the enclosure would entirely destroy what had at first been an almost necessary element in Francis's idea. He had wished to combine the two examples of Martha and Mary; so strongly was he impressed with this view, that he even wished to place his order by name under the patronage of the former saint. If the enclosure was established, the poor could no longer be visited, and the institute could no longer act directly upon society; it would close one important sphere of spiritual action, which was, perhaps, what constituted the principal charm of the order to minds like those of Madame de Chantal and her earliest companions. But never was there a Saint who was more ready to defer to others in all matters not involving right and wrong than Francis de Sales. His view remained the same; but he at once conceded the alteration demanded by the Archbishop. The institute accordingly was erected into a regular monastic order, with enclosure and under the solemn vows, in the year 1618, in virtue of a bull from Pope Paul V.

The constitutions given to the new order were those of St. Augustine, which were adapted to the existing age, and penetrated with what we may call the Salesian spirit. In the body of regulations called the Directory is contained perhaps as copious and suggestive a collection of hints for the development of the religious life as can be found in any portion of the literature of the Church. We see in it at once the legislative spirit and personal influence combined. The writer speaks indeed with the voice of law; but speaks like the tenderest and kindest father, entreating rather than commanding, and setting forth the duties of the religious life rather by painting the ideal of the perfect religious than by sternly dictating: "This you shall do; this you shall not do." Never did the founder of a religious order bequeath to his children a more perfect transcript of his own mind, a more perpetual memory

of his presence, or so easy a means of enabling each member of his institute to carry out, both in the spirit and the letter, the great though simple principle which it was his mission to convey. To give a complete analysis of the Constitutions and Directory of our Saint would far exceed the limits of the present sketch. We shall, however, endeavour to select those points which seem most characteristic of the Saint personally, and most distinctly to mark off his institute from that of all others. In so doing, we describe the Visitation as it was finally settled after the establishment of the enclosure. Each house consisted of three classes: the Sisters of the Choir, who were obliged to say office; the Associate Sisters, who were not under that obligation; and the Domestic Sisters, who were concerned in the duties of the house. Their breviary consisted only of the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin; one reason he had for this limitation, was the great difficulty of teaching ladies to chant Latin with a proper accent, to which he attached much importance, and in which he found the natives of France peculiarly deficient. The choral music of the Visitation became however exceedingly beautiful, and he speaks of this in his letters with great delight. In writing to Cardinal Bellarmine, he says, "that the chant was so happily formed according to the rules of piety, that he can hardly tell whether its sweetness is surpassed by its gravity, or its gravity by its sweetness." The age at which postulants could be admitted was not to fall short of sixteen; but widows and ladies even of extreme old age might be admitted, as also those of the most delicate and weakly constitutions, and those even who laboured under personal deformity, provided these afflictions were not such as to interfere with their joining in the service of the department in which they were placed. The austerities, as may be supposed, were not extreme; and so much kindness is shown to those of delicate constitution, that it is expressly said they must not make a scruple to eat our

of meal-time if they really required it; but they were ordered never to leave table without having at least mortified themselves in something.

Each community of the Visitation consisted of thirty-three, of whom twenty were Choir-sisters, nine Associates, and four Domestic-sisters; the Superioress must have been professed for five years, and be not less than thirty years of age; she is assisted in the government of the house by a council of four coadjutors, whose opinion, though she is bound to consult, she is not necessarily to adopt. From among them or the rest of the Sisters she was to choose two, called *Surveillantes*, whose business it is to observe any faults that are committed, and confer with the Superioress on the best remedies to apply. A beautiful spirit of maternity reigns throughout the instructions which the Saint gives for the guidance of the Superioress. The Sisters are to repose in her precisely that sweet confidence which an infant reposes in its mother; and as an infant would fly to its mother if it were torn by a brier or stung by a bee, so every sorrow, little and great, must find a remedy in the sweet wisdom of the gentle and prudent Superioress. In fact, what an infidel author has said is the first human need, namely, true guidance, in return for loving obedience, was exemplified in the relations of the Superioress and her nuns. The second functionary in a Visitation convent was the Assistant; her office was to act for the Superioress in her absence, and to superintend the due performance of the choral service; to take care of the books of the convent, to see that none were used unless authorised by the spiritual Father or Confessor, and to keep the proper order on days of confession and communion. The duties of the Directress or Mistress of the novices are beautifully explained; she is to exercise them in obedience, sweetness, and modesty, and to clear away from their characters all those follies, tendernesses, and sickly humours, by which minds, especially of women, are often made languid and enfeebled: she instructs them in the best

methods of prayer and meditation, and other spiritual exercises; she teaches them how to confess in the manner most calculated for their spiritual profit, how to employ their confessions and communions to the best advantage, and in particular to see that they carry out to the utmost that great business of all convents, intercessory prayer: her mind must be humble, generous, noble, and universal,—by which last qualification we understand the founder to mean, that liberal and large-minded capacity of entering into the feelings and difficulties of others, so as not to be discouraged even when a disposition appears somewhat rude and unmanageable at first sight; she is patiently to cultivate and train such wild plants, till they are completely brought into order and reclaimed, so as to grace and adorn the garden of the Lord. One of the rules for this office shows in a particular manner Francis's insight into character. He says: "She will take care not to amuse herself with the outward appearances of the novices, which often depend only on a graceful demeanour and elegant style of manners, or on the quickness of the intellect and propriety of language; but she will as far as possible penetrate into the very depths of their hearts, so as to discern their faults, and to know with what hand to guide them." He elsewhere cautions the Superioress to take care to be on her guard against any mere natural inclination, founded on the noble extraction of the nuns, the gentleness of their characters, their elegant manners, or other attractive qualities. One can in fact easily understand how the polished manners and soft demeanour, learned in a society like that of France in those days, might bear an external resemblance to the true gentleness produced by the Christian character; just as the buoyancy of youth, the ardour of imagination, the resoluteness of merely physical courage, produce results which, where the character is to a considerable extent influenced by grace, might be mistaken for the higher manifestations of the spiritual life.

Another important office in the community was that

called the Aide of the Superioress. This was a Sister chosen by the Superioress herself, whose business it was to warn her of the faults that she committed, and to whom all the Sisters were to address themselves if they saw any thing in the Superioress which required admonition. In this, as in many other parts of the constitutions, we discern the element of Christian friendship to be largely made use of. The Sister in charge of the household has her duties marked out in a manner which shows the most thorough business-talents on the part of the founder; indeed, this chapter, as well as those which relate to the Superioress and the Directress, might be studied with great advantage by mothers of families, and all who have charge of household affairs. Every nun who studied the constitutions, no matter what her rank, from the Superioress down to the Portress or humblest lay-sister, must have felt that the founder gave to every one of the offices an equal share of his attention. Every thing in its own department is accounted good; and no vocation is to be despised. To return, however, to the Sister whom, for want of a better English word, we must call the house-keeper. She was to undertake this duty with a special fidelity and gladness, in imitation of the holy women who followed our Lord and the Apostles, to provide them with what they required. She was to copy the diligence and fervour of St. Martha, but to avoid her anxiety and *empressement*,—a fault against which, as every reader of St. Francis must have observed, the Saint is continually preaching. The housekeeper was to see to the storage of all the provisions of the house in their proper season, and to look at them from time to time, to see that nothing was spoiling. Twice a year she was to go over the whole establishment with the *Surveillantes*, to make a report on it to the Superioress; she was to keep exact accounts and inventories of all that came under her charge, to distribute to the Sisters the materials for work, and to take care that the lay-sisters were neither overcharged with toil nor allowed to be idle.

The instructions for the sacristy afford us a good insight into Francis's views as regards ritual matters. He insists very particularly on the neatness, cleanliness, and good order of the church, of all the ornaments, vestments, and furniture of the altar. The sister-sacristan is to remember, that our Lord always loved neatness and cleanliness, and that Joseph and Nicodemus were praised for having buried His body carefully and neatly with perfumes and precious unguents. Throughout the household there reigned the utmost simplicity; but at the same time the most perfect neatness and cleanliness. On this he lays particular stress; and one reason for it undoubtedly was, that the institution was intended for ladies who had been accustomed in the world to the refinements and elegances of life. These indeed they were to sacrifice; but it was not part of the idea of his institute that the mortification of slovenliness and discomfort should be adopted: for instance, though he forbids silver plate in general, he allows them to have spoons made of that metal for the sake of neatness, "*à cause de l'honnêteté*," and also because St. Augustine, in whose rules their institute was based, used no other silver plate except these. But whatever restrictions there might be as to expensive furniture in the house, the altar was to be as rich and precious as they could with prudence make it, "for the honour and glory of God, who resides there in a most special and admirable manner." One curious rule he lays down is, that they shall throughout the whole house make no images like dolls (*poupées*), still less put any upon the altar, either to represent our Lord, or our Lady, or the angels, or any thing; that they shall have images well made and approved of by the spiritual father, especially those they put upon the altar. However, he regards all the business of the sacristan, and the proper arrangement of the church, to be of such extreme importance, that a separate directory should be made for the sacristan, which she was to have always before her eyes, and read over once a month, so as to fail in nothing that was written

in it. His expression is particularly strong: "The congregation," he says, "have an incomparable interest that this charge shall be *passionately well* exercised." The office of the Infirmarian brings us to a very characteristic department of the institute. We have seen that the sick and the aged were not excluded from the life of perfection which Francis marked out. The rules for the comfort and well-being of these Sisters are strikingly beautiful. "The Infirmarian is to breathe nothing but charity, not only in order to serve the sick Sisters well, but to bear with the fancies, distresses, and ill-humour the poor sick people often derive from their infirmities. She is to divert their disagreeable impressions in the softest and most dexterous way she can, without ever showing herself disgusted or annoyed. She is to have a list to help her memory of every thing required for the comfort and good order of the infirmary, and to take care that the rooms shall be neat, clean, and nicely ornamented with pictures, green leaves, and flowers, according as the season shall permit." Thus we see, that in some degree the idea of the Visitation resembled that of *Les Petites Sœurs des Pauvres*, except that the sick were themselves religious, and not so far infirm as to be incapable of adhering to the rules. Their presence in the convent was of course the same advantage to those Sisters who were in health as the objects of their angelic charity are to the holy order to which we have alluded. They would furnish them with examples of patience, with the living copy of the sufferings of our Lord; and by waiting on them without going out of their enclosure, they might add the virtues of Martha to those of Mary. In a Convent of Mercy with which we are acquainted, the good Sisters have for this very purpose taken into their house, as an inmate, a poor creature afflicted with cancer. The sweet resignation and the unfailing prayers of this . . . woman are a perpetual edification to the good Sisters; her intercession is wonderfully efficacious, and we believe a whole chapter might be filled with illustrations of the good results de-

rived from the constant witnessing of such patience in affliction. But to return to the Visitation. The idea suggested in the chapter on the Infirmarian, short as it is, seems to embody the very principle of the orders engaged in active charity. Those constitutions which relate to the smaller offices of the house, such as the keeper of the wardrobe and the laundry, are equally interesting in their way. Those which give rules for the lay-sisters, whether domestics or *tourières*, contain a kind of sketch of the duties of the Catholic servant, and afford another illustration of that most useful action on society which all the religious orders possess, but which, in a particular degree, we discern in the Visitation. One rule is worth quoting at length. "The Sisters employed in the kitchen and the other household service will do it with cheerfulness and consolation, recollecting what St. Martha did, and representing to themselves those little but sweet meditations which St. Catherine of Sienna made use of, when, in the midst of such tasks, did not cease her ecstatic contemplations of God. Thus ought the Sisters as far as possible to hold their hearts recollected in the goodness of God, Who, if they are faithful, will one day declare before the whole world, that what they did for His servants was done for Him." Before quitting the subject of the government of the house, we should notice that special feature of it which consists in the office of the spiritual father. The supreme authority over the congregation was that of the bishop, which Francis preferred to that of the father-general, which is more usual in other orders, because any abuses or any decay in the spirit of the institution was more likely to be checked by the frequent change in the depositary of the chief authority, where this was held by the bishop of the diocese. But whatever advantage was derived in a spiritual point of view from the office of the father-general, he still retained by instituting that of the spiritual father. This officer was appointed by the bishop, and his duty was to take care that the rules were observed, and that no change

or abuse was introduced. He was to visit the house once a year, in company with another ecclesiastic of ripe age, virtuous and discreet. He was to be present at the elections of the Superioress and ordinary confessor; was to sign permissions when any extraordinary reason made it necessary for a sister to go out of the convent; and to him both the Superioress and the other Sisters were to have recourse, whenever there was occasion for special prudence or foresight. With regard to the ordinary confessor, the rules which Francis lays down for his choice are such as might be supposed from the importance of the office. He was to discharge the office of the spiritual father in his absence, as regarded granting dispensations and giving advice in any questions that might arise. One point which Francis appears to have provided for with considerable anxiety in the rules of this office is, that the confessor should be thoroughly imbued with the spirit of the institute; he was to take particular care to avoid doing any thing, either by the imposition of extraordinary penances, or by the counsel and advice given in confession, which might disturb the order and the routine of the monastery. The holy founder carefully secures for the Sisters the privilege of confessing or conferring on the state of their conscience with any person of known character, without the Superioress asking why the Sister wishes to do so. Yet if she frequently demands it, then the Superioress will inform the spiritual father, who will dexterously prevent the holy liberty of confession from degenerating into a source of disquiet, melancholy, aversion to the ordinary confessor, or a vain preference for individuals.

The gentle spirit of these constitutions was much attacked by the rigorists of the age, who, complaining of the deficiency of exterior austerities, said that "these religious had found out the secret of going to Paradise by a road sown with roses without thorns, of entering into it by another door than that of the Cross, and with another key than that which the Son of David carried on His shoulders." Others nick-named the in-

stitute the "Confraternity of the Descent of the Cross," and others said that the bishop was founding a hospital rather than a monastery. The proper answer to all these objections is afforded by the multitude of holy souls who were nurtured by this institution, and who would otherwise have had no assistance of that kind to enable them to reach the perfection intended for them; and by the rapidity with which it spread throughout the Catholic Church, showing that it met the needs of religion at that time. The Church itself has placed the winning gentleness of the Salesian spirit beyond the reach of dispute, by permitting it to influence as it has done the method of direction ever since. Before the death of Francis de Sales, houses of the Visitation were founded, under his auspices, at Lyons, Moulins, Grenoble, Bourges, Paris, Orleans, and Dijon; and in less than sixty years from the first foundation the order reckoned no fewer than 120 monasteries. Here the limits of this biography oblige us to leave this subject; and we proceed to trace the general life of the Saint from the period when we interrupted it to give continuously the history of this, his principal foundation.

CHAPTER X.

FOUNDATION OF THE FLORIMONTANE ACADEMY — THE TREATISES OF "THE INTRODUCTION" AND "THE LOVE OF GOD."

IN 1605 and 1606 he made a general visitation of his whole diocese, undergoing excessive fatigue, and often great danger, in traversing the Alpine districts, which formed the greatest part of it, and every where preaching, catechising, and hearing confessions, with the utmost zeal and assiduity. The results of this visitation he embodied in a report to the Holy Father, which forms a most copious and interesting record of his apostolic labours, and of those business details, the possession of which is so essential to the good government of a diocese, and which his talents peculiarly fitted him to acquire, widely distinct as at first sight a mind of heroic charity like his seems to be from that which is best qualified to conduct the transactions of the world.

In 1607, in combination with the President Favre, he founded a literary institution at Annecy, called the Florimontane Academy. The rules which he enacted for it are among the most curious of his *opuscula*. Only Catholics of good character were to be admitted members of it, and each on admission was to deliver a discourse in prose or verse to the assembly. At the general meetings, eminent men in the various branches of art were to be admitted, such as painters, sculptors, mechanics, and architects; lectures were to be given on mathematics, cosmography, philosophy, and rhetoric (excluding theology and politics), and on the cultivation of languages, especially the French language. The style of speaking was to be prose, polished and full, without affectation; and the lecturers were as much as possible to dispose of one subject in each lecture, and do their utmost "to teach well, much, and in a short time." Besides the lectures, there were to be discourses in a

more ornamented style, implying the use of the oratorical art. Persons of rank, such as nobles and prelates, were to have a place to themselves at the meetings. The officers were to be the president, a man of distinction and virtues, zealous for the good of the academy; his assessors; the secretary, who was to be "a man of clear, acute, ready and generous wit, and versed in literature;" the censors, who were to be thoroughly well versed in every thing, and "like an encyclopædia;" the treasurer, and a paid attendant.

In the following year, 1608, he brought out the work by which he is best known, and which contains in the most popular form the results of his experience in the conduct of souls. This is the *Introduction to the Spiritual Life*, a book which, notwithstanding all the changes of manners, remains unequalled as a manual of practical instructions for those who are endeavouring to lead a holy life in the world. The possession of this book, and the grace to study it, are a blessing second only to that of being under the guidance of a wise and holy director. Nothing is omitted in it: the method of meditation, of confession, of receiving holy communion, the arrangement of one's day, the means of arriving at the different virtues, and the choice of them; rules on the promotion of friendship, the kind and degree of amusements to be permitted, the method of dealing with temptations, advice as to periodical renewal of one's good resolutions,—the whole system of the spiritual life is here laid down with a richness of experience and an insight into the heart which has never been surpassed. The only book at all to be compared with it is Rodrigues on *Christian Perfection*; but there is a certain sweet and genial simplicity peculiar to Francis de Sales, which recommends his book even more than that treasury of spiritual wisdom to persons living in the world. The *Introduction to the Devout Life* was drawn up by Francis chiefly from letters he had written to one of his penitents, Madame de Charmoisy. These letters were handed about in manuscript, and were so admired,

that his friends urged upon him the publication of a complete work embodying their results. The book immediately obtained a vast circulation throughout Europe, and even became known in England soon after its appearance, a copy having been sent by Marie de Medicis to James I., who was exceedingly struck with it, and expressed his surprise that no such work ever came from the pen of *his* bishops. The moderation of the view taken by the holy writer as to the worldly amusements of balls and dancing, raised some controversy among the rigorist school, one of whom went so far as to declaim against the book from the pulpit, and actually to tear it in pieces in the middle of his sermon. Never was an attack more unjust; for there are few persons indeed who could calmly read the chapter in the *Introduction* on the subject of balls, and not rather be powerfully detached from those amusements than encouraged to adopt them. Francis allows only that "in their own nature they are indifferent;" but devotes a long disquisition to show that they are "usually dangerous, dissipate the spirit of devotion, weaken strength, chill charity, and awaken in the soul innumerable evil affections; so that great prudence is required in their use."

In 1609 he was engaged in effecting reforms in the Benedictine Abbey of Talloires, and of those monasteries which, like that of Sixt, had in the course of ages fallen into a lax and irregular state. He completely succeeded in bringing it not only into conformity with the rules, but to be a most fervent and edifying community. Soon afterwards he went to Gex, whither he was summoned by order of Henry IV. to confer with the Baron de Luz, the king's lieutenant-general in Burgundy, on the religious affairs of Gex. On this occasion the Rhone was flooded; he boldly passed through the city of Geneva in his episcopal habit, and styling himself to the officer at the gate as the bishop of the diocese. The officer did not seem to understand the expression; and Francis remained a whole hour in the

city without molestation. During this visit to Gex he succeeded in restoring to Catholic worship eight parish-churches, and made a great number of conversions.

The same year was marked by an event which had very great effect, not so much on his life as in providing an observer of that life, who has handed down a singularly minute and beautiful picture of it. This was the consecration of Peter Camus, Bishop of Belley, at which Francis de Sales officiated, and which was the commencement of a friendship between the two prelates lasting till Francis's death. As their dioceses were close to each other, and the Bishop of Belley, both from his youth (he was but twenty-five years old when consecrated) and from his ardent and reverential disposition, began immediately to look up to Francis as his spiritual father and guide, he saw him very frequently, and asked his advice whenever he was in any difficulty. Once a year the two bishops made it a rule to spend a week in retreat at each other's house; and the Bishop of Belley took the fullest advantage of the many opportunities he had to keep a copious record of the conversations of Francis. These reminiscences he collected into the book entitled *L'Esprit de S. François de Sales*, perhaps the most interesting and valuable, as it is one of the most curious compilations ever written. The only work at all resembling it—though of course we only compare them in a purely secular and literary point of view—is Boswell's *Life of Johnson*. The latter biography is often considered as something perfectly unique, and without any thing either equal or similar to it as a complete portrait of the life and character of an individual. Persons who so speak of Boswell's *Johnson* cannot have read *L'Esprit de S. François de Sales*, a record nearly as voluminous, and showing quite as much of that genius for singling out a hero, and dwelling on his character till the minutest feature of it is represented with the fidelity of the most life-like painting.

In 1610 Francis de Sales had the affliction of losing his old preceptor the Abbé Deage, whose declining years he had soothed with filial kindness. It may be mentioned as an instance of the sweet and affectionate character of the Saint, that when he said Mass for the repose of the old man's soul, on reaching the "Our Father," he was so overcome by the recollection that the poor Abbé had first taught him to say the "Our Father," that he was almost unable to proceed. The same year he had another great loss, though not by death, in the promotion of Antoine Favre to the presidentship of the senate of Chambéry, and his consequent withdrawal from Annecy, where he had lived in the most intimate friendship with the holy bishop. As regarded his episcopal labours, the life of Francis about this period seems to have been crowded with work, and like every other part of his career, full of incidents characterising his untiring sweetness and diligence. He made two or three remarkable conversions this year, one of them a Calvinist lady of Geneva, Madame de Ste. Sergues, who was so conspicuous for her bitterness against Catholicity, and her activity on behalf of her sect, that she used to go by the nickname of "the Arch-ministress." Another was a Baron de Monthelon, whose first impulse towards the faith was given by the reading of the *Introduction*. A third was a poor apostate friar, named Bartholonio, who, much like some melancholy cases in the present day, had abandoned the faith merely for the indulgence of his passions. He had recourse to Francis de Sales, as the common father of prodigal children, and was charitably brought back to the true fold.

Besides the general business of the diocese, Francis had at this time a good deal of correspondence with the Holy See; among other objects, to procure the canonisation of Amadeus III., Duke of Savoy, whose memory was held in the highest veneration in those provinces. The question of the authority of the Holy See in temporal matters was at the same period both

contested throughout Europe. Bellarmine, in his celebrated work, *De Romano Pontifice*, had maintained the theory that the Pope has, by Divine right, an indirect power even in temporals, — a view which at Rome was thought too moderate, and by the Gallican theologians too strong. In France the controversy was vehemently agitated on both sides, much to the distress of Francis de Sales, whose gentle spirit saw no advantage in thus letting out the waters of strife. The course which he earnestly recommended was silence, on the ground, to use his homely similitude, that in those difficult times there was trouble enough in defending the brood of the Church from the kite which incessantly hovered over them, without allowing the chickens themselves to be pecking at each other. He even disapproved of the extent to which Bellarmine had opened the dispute; not that he passed any judgment as to whether he was right or wrong, but simply from the deep conviction which he entertained, both by reason and from his natural disposition, of the necessity of peace. He looked upon the question as easily settled, practically, by those who acted in the spirit of charity; but difficult in the midst of such violent contention, and useless, because there was, in fact, no disposition on the part of the Pope to interfere with the temporal rights of sovereigns, — nothing to call for the question being opened at the risk of ruining the peace and unanimity of Catholics. In an able memoir addressed to Cardinal Caffarelli Borghese, he developed this conciliatory policy, recommending the Holy See to invite the French government to impose silence on the seditious controversialists, whose writings were the prelude to the unhappy variance between the two powers in the reign of Louis XIV. On the Catholic side, he advised that preachers should be ordered to inculcate with calmness the duty of submission to the Holy See, and that in replying to the opponents of the papal authority, writers should adopt the indirect rather than the direct method, and point out gently the unreasonableness of such attacks. He

further urged the importance of acting so as to bring about a better understanding between the Sorbonne and the Society of Jesus, the centres of these conflicting views; to soothe the former of these bodies and the French prelacy generally, by addressing them with briefs drawn up in a winning tone; but in the first instance to have the affair discussed by the nuncio, the French cardinals, and the government, showing, on the part of the Holy See, an earnest wish for the cessation of these disputes. The bitterness of the foes of the Church was probably too violent to have yielded to the oil thus thrown upon its waters, even could the experiment have been fully tried; but the lesson given by the gentleness of the Saint will always remain a profitable study for those who seek to convince others of the truth. He set forth the charity of the Church, as such men as St. Gregory VII. exhibited her unbending firmness; and even in Francis de Sales the one did not exist without the other.

In the spring of 1613, Francis de Sales made a journey to Milan, in order to visit the tomb of St. Charles Borromeo, which pilgrimage he had undertaken by vow, on occasion of the illness of Madame de Chantal. Important business also necessitated his proceeding to Turin. He sought to obtain the patronage of the Duke of Savoy for the Order of the Visitation, and several houses of that institute which he contemplated establishing; to demand permission to place ecclesiastical instructors in the college of Annecy in the room of the lay-teachers, who had mismanaged it; and finally, to defend a number of persons of rank who had been unjustly accused of assassinating the secretary of the Duke of Nemours. He was accompanied on his journey by a large company of ecclesiastics and laics of distinction, one of the latter of whom has left a beautiful description of his conversation in travelling, in which he relates what kind and wise admonitions the Saint gave him for his conduct in life, as a courtier and man of the world, encouraging him to the practice of religion,

as sweet, easy, and attractive, pointing to the examples of those who were sanctified in courts and camps, such as David, Judas Maccabeus, and St. Louis, and warning him of the vanity of the world, and the inconstancy of fortune. At Turin he was honourably received by the Duke of Savoy, who, except in the question of the accused persons for whom he pleaded, willingly acceded to all his demands. At Milan, where he was welcomed by the cousin and successor of St. Charles, Cardinal Frederick Borromeo, he had the happiness of saying Mass at the tomb of St. Charles, and remained for hours in contemplation before the body of the Saint, entreating his intercession to obtain him grace to govern Geneva as St. Charles had governed Milan. So deeply was he buried in these reflections, that when his companions, on coming out of the glorious Cathedral of Milan, were expressing their wonder at its magnificence, he declared that he had seen nothing but the relics of the holy archbishop. The incident reminds one of the story of St. Bernard travelling a whole day by the lake of Geneva, and being all the time so absorbed in divine contemplation, as never once to notice the marvels of nature which are there so beautifully displayed. Both nature and art are insignificant in the presence of the splendour of faith. This visit of Francis to Milan was characterised by another incident, which brought out strikingly not only the intensity of his faith, but also the loving and trustful spirit by which it was adorned. Cardinal Borromeo having permitted him to officiate in the ceremony of exposing to public veneration the holy napkin or *sudarium* preserved at Milan, the heat and pressure in the church being extremely great, Francis's face was so drenched with perspiration, that a few drops fell on the holy relic he held with passionate devotion before him. The occurrence greatly distressed the Cardinal, who even sharply reproved the Saint for carelessness. Francis, however, in the confidence of the love which he felt for his Lord, showed no uneasiness; but affectionately seized on the beam

tiful significance of the circumstance, as showing the goodness of our Lord, who allows us to mingle our sweat with that which fell from His holy body, and to consecrate all our toils by a continual reference to His.

Francis returned to Annecy by the end of May, and occupied himself with various important affairs, among which were the reconstruction of eight more parishes in the province of Gex; the establishment of the Barnabites as teachers in the College of Annecy, and of the Carthusians in the Abbey of Ripailles. In 1614 he received an invitation from the Emperor Mathias I. to attend, as prince of the empire, a diet to be held at Ratisbonne the following year. This event is worthy of notice as an historical curiosity. The bishops of Geneva had now, for nearly a century been excluded by their rebellious subjects from occupying the city, to the sovereignty of which they had never ceased to assert their right. The Holy Roman Empire, the very representative of prescription, order, and law, disdained to recognise the Calvinist republic; and on every occasion when the princes were convoked to the imperial assemblies, sent a courier to Geneva to notify to the bishop, who was still supposed to be there, that his attendance was requested by the emperor. The courier reported his compulsory absence; and thus the ancient rights of the bishops were never allowed to become dormant. The reply of Francis to the emperor is still preserved, in which he excuses himself in simple but dignified terms, on the ground of the poverty of his see. The same year he paid a visit to his friend the Archbishop of Lyons, which was attended with the important results to which we have already adverted, of the establishment of a Convent of the Visitation at Lyons, and in the alteration of the constitutions of that institute, the archbishop strongly advising to place it on the footing of a regular cloistered order. Next year, 1615, the Archbishop returned Francis's visit by spending a short time at Annecy; and thus these holy prelates revived the old custom by which, is

primitive times, neighbouring bishops were wont to advise with each other about the affairs of their dioceses. The Duke of Savoy, as on many other occasions, found in this friendship with a bishop with whose sovereign he was at rivalry, the materials of ungenerous suspicion of the loyalty of his illustrious subject, who had to remove them by explaining, what the duke might surely by this time have known, that no political purpose whatever entered into conferences like these. In the course of the same year he was enabled to place the Barnabites at Thonon in charge of the educational department of the Holy House; and the office of Vicar-general of the diocese happening to fall vacant, he selected to fill it his brother, John Francis de Sales, then canon of the Cathedral of Annecy, who afterwards became his coadjutor, and upon his death succeeded him as Bishop of Geneva. John Francis de Sales was in temper a great contrast to his brother, his goodness being of the grave and austere kind, somewhat allied to sadness, of which there was not the slightest trace in the Saint; and it often happened that the gentleness and sweetness of the one interposed to remedy the sternness of the other, as equity comes in to temper justice. During all this time, and subsequently, Francis was effecting great reforms in the episcopal administration, particularly in the appointment of parish-priests. Hitherto abuses had crept in from the highly aristocratical spirit of the age and country; and men had been placed in the care of souls who had little to recommend them but the splendour of their birth. Francis, however, as we have seen, resolutely carried out the principle of giving away the incumbencies by *concursum*, that is, to the candidate of the greatest merit, as tested by an examination. This regulation frequently occasioned the most violent dissatisfaction on the part of ecclesiastics and their relatives, who obstinately refused to comprehend the new arrangement; and the sweetness of the Saint was often put to the proof in a manner which would have been too much for any patience but such as his, by disap-

pointed claimants or their friends calling upon him, and venting their rage by the most violent and abusive expressions. At this time, it not unfrequently occurred that people whom his unbending sense of justice had displeased, would beset his house during the night with deafening noises, blowing horns, and making their dogs bark and howl. Insults of this kind Francis de Sales knew how to set at rest, by passing them over without the least notice; and it generally happened that those who thus far forgot themselves, took refuge from the stings of their conscience in his angelic spirit of forgiveness, and made the humblest apologies for the insults which, like stones flung upwards to the sky, only fell back on the heads of those who threw them, and made them feel conscious of their own meanness when they looked on the untroubled mirror of his sanctity.

Early in 1616 he brought to a completion his greatest work, the famous *Treatise on the Love of God*. It is a book which possesses an interest resembling that of the heroic actions of the Saint, much of it having been written, not like ordinary theological works, but in actual ecstasies of that love towards God of which he is the historian and the teacher. His manuscript was blotted with his tears, and the treatise doubtless abounds with thoughts directly suggested to his mind by the Holy Spirit. When he was meditating on the commencement of the work, on March 25, 1614, he was visited by this inspiration, manifesting itself even visibly: a globe of fire descended on him, and dividing itself into a multitude of little flames, played harmlessly around him, and rendered his face radiant like a star. His brother, Louis de Sales, entered the room, just when this manifestation had disappeared, and perceiving his face as though it were on fire, the Saint, in reply to his startled inquiries, told him, trembling all over, what had occurred. In memory of this event, Francis de Sales wrote these words in a book which he always carried about with him: *Die vigesima quinta*

Martis, hodie servum suum Franciscum misericorditer visitari dignatus est Dominus. The *Treatise on the Love of God* is perhaps little read in this country, the common translation being very indifferent, and the quaint old French of the original not being very easy to ordinary readers; but a greater mine of rich and beautiful thoughts does not exist in the devotional literature of the Church. This treatise was also sent to James I. of England, who, as we have already mentioned, expressed the highest admiration for it, and wished he could see the holy author. When this was told Francis de Sales, he said, with all the fire of apostolic zeal, "Oh, who will give me wings like the dove, and I will fly to the king into that fair island, once the land of saints, and now the domain of error! Ah, living God, if the prince allows me, I will go to that new mission: I will speak to the king, and preach the truth to him at the peril of my life!" Had the Apostle of the Chablais been enabled to carry out these aspirations, who knows how different might have been the face of things in England at this day!

In the Advent of 1616 and the Lent of 1617, Francis preached at Grenoble by invitation of the parliament of Dauphiny. The first of these courses was attended by a remarkable person, the Marshal Duke de Lesdiguières, then governor of the province,—one of those proud and stern Calvinist nobles whose stubbornness afforded so complete a parallel to that of the Puritans in England; yet the invincible sweetness, and still more perhaps the dignity of Francis, produced a singular impression on the haughty old marshal, who often invited the holy bishop to his table, and delighted to hear his conversation. The Calvinist ministers of the neighbourhood persuaded a nobleman of their party to remonstrate with the duke on this dangerous friendship; he made a most characteristic reply: "Tell these gentlemen," he said, "that I am old enough to know what to do. It is not for these young upstarts to teach a man of my age and quality how to conduct himself; I know

how bishops ought to be treated; it is very different with our ministers, who at best answer to the rank of *curés*, since they have rejected the episcopal dignity, although so well-founded in Scripture: when I see sovereign princes, the sons and brothers of kings, become ministers, as I now see them consider it a distinction to be bishops, archbishops, and cardinals, I shall consider what honour I am to pay to the ministers." Ultimately, in 1622, the duke was reconciled to the Catholic Church; his reason had long been convinced by the arguments of Francis, but he could not be persuaded to break off a connection which, as in so many other cases, had far more to do with his hesitation than any controversial difficulties. Many other conversions resulted from these missions at Grenoble, and also the establishment of a house of the Visitation, the locality for which was selected in the midst of the wild mountain-scenery of the vicinity. On returning from his second visit to Grenoble, Francis took the opportunity of staying a few days at the Grande Chartreuse, where the sternest aspect of nature harmonises so well with the penitential lessons taught by the lives of the simple and holy monks who dwell there. All the neighbourhood of Grenoble, thus consecrated by the footsteps of a Saint, has lately become the chosen home of a far more intense devotion. La Salette, the scene of the latest apparition of the Queen of Saints, whither the eyes of Catholics are now turned from the most distant corners of the world, is at no great distance from Grenoble.

The year 1617 was marked by severe afflictions for the affectionate soul of Francis. His brother, the Baron de Thorens, was carried off by fever whilst with the army, and his young widow, the daughter of Madame de Chantal, was so overwhelmed with the bereavement, that it brought on a premature confinement, of which she died; though having had the happiness of receiving the last Sacraments, and of being invested on her death-bed with the habit of the Visitation.

CHAPTER XL

VISIT TO PARIS WITH THE CARDINAL OF SAVOY—LAST YEARS OF
FRANCIS DE SALES.

IN 1618 Francis was chosen by the Duke of Savoy to accompany the embassy to Paris headed by the cardinal-prince his brother, and commissioned to negotiate the marriage of his son, the Prince of Piedmont, with Christine of France, daughter of Henry IV., and sister of Louis XIII. If, on the occasion of his former visit, the astonishing achievement of converting a whole province from heresy to Catholicity had directed towards him the interest of all Paris, fully equal was the admiration now awaiting him as the author of the *Introduction* and the treatise *On the Love of God*, which great judges did not hesitate to place on a level with the works of the Ambroses and Augustines. The negotiations of the embassy lasted for nearly a year, during which Francis received incessant invitations to preach, which he did almost daily: the people never tiring of listening to him; although neither his elocution nor his style was such as might have been expected to attract those highly-polished audiences. The secret lay in the exquisite charm of Divine grace, which even visibly rayed out from him. The churches were so crowded, that it more than once happened that a ladder had to be brought for the preacher to enter by the window, the doors being completely blocked up. People ran to gaze at him, or to touch his robe as he passed in the streets; and they even bribed his barber to give them his hair to keep as relics. He was consulted on all hands by those of every rank, from the prince down to the captive in the dungeon, who were in difficulties or distress of mind; and his prudence never failed to remove the doubts which weighed upon them. His unruffled se-

renity was sometimes put to the proof by impertinent visitors, who, with that rudeness which seems inseparable from heresy, came with questions they imagined would embarrass him; but they always left him with respect and goodwill. Among the leading persons who frequented his society, we must not omit to mention Vincent of Paul, whom he was in the habit of styling "the worthiest priest he had ever known," and under whose direction he placed a community of the Visitation which he established in Paris. Great efforts were again made at this time by the French court to induce him to remain in France. Cardinal de Retz, Bishop of Paris, had set his heart on having him for his coadjutor, and offered him a rich pension, the entire control of his diocese, and the appointment of his brother, John Francis de Sales, to succeed him at Geneva, if he would consent to come; but all was in vain. Nothing but the will of God, evidenced by a command from the Holy Father himself, would have induced Francis de Sales to quit the see where Providence had originally placed him.

The negotiations being at length completed,—for which result the diplomatists were in a great measure indebted to the tact and prudence of Francis,—the royal marriage was celebrated, and the embassy quitted Paris. Francis de Sales, in reward for his services, was complimented with the office of grand almoner to the Princess of Savoy, which he only accepted on condition of not being asked to reside out of his diocese, and resigned almost immediately, so far as implied any active duties. His brother, John Francis de Sales, was invited to Turin to discharge them in his stead. The influence of the court of Savoy soon afterwards obtained from the Holy See the appointment of John Francis as coadjutor of Geneva, with future succession. He was consecrated on January 17th, 1621, under the title of Bishop of Chalcedon; and after a short interval, was permitted by the court of Turin to undertake his duties at Annecy. Francis regularly educated his brother

for the office of bishop, both forming his character and communicating to him those wise maxims of episcopal government, of the method of preaching, and of the interpretation of Scripture, and putting him in possession of those stores of detailed information about the state of the diocese, which he had accumulated during years of labour and vigilance. Every day he devoted some hours to the task of imparting this instruction; and thus, long after his death, the spirit as well as the name of this great Saint continued to rule the Church of Geneva. For even his second successor, Charles Auguste, was a member of the house of Sales, a nephew and disciple of the Saint, who had perceived in his early youth the promise of unusual holiness; and having taken him under his special charge shortly before his death, he was able to give his mind that enduring impress which a great man needs only a very short space of time to convey.

We are now drawing to the close of his career, which, full of activity as it was in every part of it, was never more energetic than in the two or three years immediately preceding his death, when his failing health and frame, shattered by such incessant toil, would have induced any one else to take repose.

During the years 1618-20, he made several tedious journeys, and underwent great exertions, in order to re-establish discipline in the abbey of Sixt, a community which had got into an unsatisfactory state, and on which, at an early period of his episcopate, he had bestowed great pains; but which again and again relapsed into its former relaxation. During one of his visits to this abbey, he wrought a miracle which was attested by six witnesses in the processes of his canonisation. Great numbers of people had resorted to the place to ask his counsel, as they constantly did; and the increased consumption of food weighed heavily on the resources of the abbey. Francis prayed, and the river produced such a supply of fish as had never been remembered up to that time; the usual quantity of bread baked for the community

sufficed for the additional mouths, and the cask of wine from which they drew for all the strangers sustained no increased diminution.

In 1620 he enacted constitutions for the hermitage of Mont Voiron, a holy institute which had long flourished on the north of the Lake of Geneva, till Calvinist barbarity had overthrown it. Several devout religious, and among them one named Rigaud, who had adopted the eremitical life after having been many years actively engaged in the political world, restored the associations of the place, and besought Francis de Sales to devise a rule for them. This he accomplished with his usual prudence, and was accordingly considered as the founder of the congregation.

In 1621 he was engaged in the business of negotiating a reform in a convent of Bernardine nuns, at St. Catherine's, near Annecy. It proved a tedious and difficult undertaking, from the opposition of the abbess, who headed a party in the community opposed to reformation. As usual in such cases, this party supported itself by the civil power. The holy bishop's correspondence about this simple affair reached above a hundred letters. The matter at length ended in the foundation of a separate convent for the nuns who were anxious to live up to the rule. Francis de Sales drew up constitutions for them; and the reformed institute became a flourishing stock, from which several communities branched off.

One of the last public proceedings of the Saint, and which, from the circumstances attending it, derived a peculiarly touching interest, was the translation of the relics of St. Germain from the nave to the high altar of the abbey of Talloires. This is a beautiful spot near the lake of Annecy, where were the ruins of the hermitage of St. Germain, which Francis had caused to be rebuilt. At the ceremony of the translation he spoke at great length on the devotion inculcated by the Church for saints and relics, and on the virtues of the holy ascetic whose abode, laid waste by heretical violence,

he had piously repaired. When all was over, he visited the hermitage, and gazed with delight on the exquisite prospect around him, the calm lake and the overhanging mountains, and his own beloved little city of Annecy in the distance. He said that, if it were our Lord's will, he should wish to come there, to enjoy an interval of rest; he would leave the burden and heat of the day to his coadjutor, and with his rosary and his pen he would serve God and the Church in that peaceful hermitage. "What a delicious site!" he exclaimed, with the feeling no less of a poet than a saint. "How great and beautiful thoughts will fall around us, thick and soft, as the snows come down in winter!" It was not a passing fancy, but apparently a settled plan, which he had fully matured in his mind. He gave orders the same day to the prior of Talloires to have five or six cells built for him, and announced his intention to settle there as soon as he could arrange to transfer the diocese to his brother. "And then," he said, "we will serve God with the breviary, the rosary, and the pen; we shall enjoy a holy leisure to trace out for the glory of God and the instruction of souls what I have been turning over in my mind these thirty years and more, and which I have used in my sermons, instructions, and meditations; I have abundance of materials, and besides, God will inspire me. Oh, who will give me the wings of a dove, to fly into this sacred desert, and breathe awhile under the shadow of the Cross!" He had in his mind plans enough to have occupied more than a life-time. There was to be a history of Jesus Christ in four books; the first, a sort of diatessaron, or harmony of the four gospels; the second, a treatise on the evidences, drawn from the words of our Lord in the gospel; the third, on the Christian virtues, as set forth in the gospel; the fourth, a history of the primitive Church, drawn from the Acts of the Apostles; besides a similar work on the Epistles of St. Paul. Then another treatise, supposing all this completed, "on the love of our neighbour," would have served as the pendant to

his great work on the Love of God. Lastly, in a series of letters on the Pastoral Office, he would have thrown together the results of his vast and unexampled experience as a missionary-priest and bishop. It was, of course, obvious that, even if years of health had been still afforded him, these designs were too vast for him to expect to accomplish them. Of this he was perfectly conscious; but he remarked, with profound practical wisdom, that "to give scope to the activity of the mind, we ought to form designs as great as if we had a long life before us, but not to reckon on doing more than if we had to die to-morrow." The only part of his designs which the holy bishop was enabled in some degree to accomplish, was the superintendence of the education of his nephew and future successor Charles Auguste de Sales, whose residence in the household and under the care of the holy prelate during the last twelvemonth of his life gave him, as we have already mentioned, impressions which were never obliterated, and were the means of his worthily keeping up, both by imitating and by writing the life of his uncle, those heroic virtues which became almost the hereditary possession of his race.

In May 1622 he was commissioned by the Holy See to preside at a chapter of the order of Feuillants, held at Pignerol, there being at the time considerable disputes in the order relative to the election of a general, on which they were unable to agree. By the address and charity of Francis these dissensions were happily appeased, and harmony restored. The exertions, however, which he went through in managing this difficult affair were more than his strength was adequate to sustain. He was now fifty-four years of age, and the infirmities of age began to weigh heavily on him. He suffered greatly from weakness of the chest, violent pains in the head and stomach, swelling and inflammation of the legs,—all these symptoms indicating a general break-up in his constitution. Yet he still held on,—the energy of his soul rising superior to the decay of the body. On

leaving Pinerol he visited Turin, whither he was invited by the court. There he stayed a short time, lodging in a small and stifling cell in the monastery of the Fenillants; though handsome accommodation was eagerly offered him on all sides. The archbishopric of Turin having fallen vacant, that rich and splendid appointment was pressed upon him in vain. He wished to hasten his return to Annecy, as a scarcity was prevailing in the country which he hoped to relieve. The court at length unwillingly let him go; and on his departure the Princess of Piedmont presented him with a magnificent diamond ring of the value of 3000 francs. He accepted it gladly for the sake of his poor people; and he was no sooner in Annecy than he pawned it to the jewellers, in order to obtain the means of carrying on his charities. The ring was speedily redeemed by his friends, and returned to him; and he would again put it in pawn, till it became a proverb in the town, much like the snuff-boxes and watches which, in our own days, are passed in charitable circulation from one raffle to another.

CHAPTER XII.

DEATH OF FRANCIS DE SALES.

TOWARDS the close of the year, he was invited by the Duke of Savoy to attend him at Avignon, where he was to meet Louis XIII., in order to congratulate that prince on his successes against the Huguenot faction. Francis had a presentiment that this journey would be his last; but he did not think it right to decline the invitation of his sovereign, especially as it was likely to afford him the opportunity of negotiating for the interests of religion. Accordingly he made preparation, with the utmost calmness, as if he were to return no more. He made his will, charging them to bury him in the nave of the Church of the Visitation at Annecy; but if he died out of his diocese, leaving the place of his sepulture at the choice of those who should attend him at the time. He limited the adornments of his funeral to thirteen candles, and would have no other escutcheons than the holy Name of Jesus. On November 7th, he made his general confession, and in the afternoon handed to his brother and coadjutor a mass of papers relating to the business of the diocese; after which he said cheerfully, that he seemed to rest on earth with one foot only, the other was raised in the air, and ready to go. On November 8th, he bade farewell to his relatives and friends, to the canons, and to his dear community of the Visitation, for which he had thought and toiled so much. One of them, an innocent and holy soul, Sister Simplicienne, had foretold that he would not outlive the year. As he parted with another of them, Sister Anne-Jacqueline Coste, she wept as she had never done before on any of his journeys. When he asked her why was this, she said that her heart told her they would see each other no more.

Francis, who, in the spirit of prophecy, foresaw that the good Sister herself was not destined long to survive him, replied that his heart also told him that they would see each other much sooner than she thought.

On the 9th of November he set out on his journey, amidst the tears of the whole city, and proceeded to Avignon by way of Belley and Lyons. At Lyons a trifling incident happened, which is worth relating as an example of his sweet and gentle demeanour. As he was going on board the boat, the boatman refused to receive him without his passport. When his attendants were angry at the delay, the bishop remarked, "Let him alone; he knows his business of boatman, and fulfils it: we don't know that of travellers." He had to wait an hour for the passport under a bitterly cold wind, but showed a calmness which diffused itself over his irritated followers. When at last they got on board, he went and sat next the boatman who had been so tiresome, observing, "I wish to make friends with this good man, and to talk to him a little of our Lord."

A similar example of the manners of this Christian traveller occurred on their arrival at Avignon. The city being crowded with the retinue of the two courts of France and Savoy, Francis and his company could find no room at the first hotel at which they applied, and had to go on foot to another through torrents of rain. The holy bishop, as he went along, catechised the poor man who served as their guide; and when they parted at the door of the hotel, said he would remember him next day at the Holy Sacrifice. If we consider all the circumstances, his shattered health and lameness, and the great fatigue he had undergone, equanimity like this will appear so unusual as to deserve a record in a life every action of which was heroic.

At Avignon he held aloof from all the magnificence which the reunion of two courts in that splendid age so lavishly displayed. He would not even go to the window to look at the triumphant entry of Louis XIII. and the two queens, Marie de Medicis and Anne of

Austria. He spent his time in prayer, in conference with religious persons, and in visiting the various places of devotion in the city. On November 25th, the royal visitors quitting Avignon, Francis accompanied their train. When they arrived at Lyons, offers of hospitality poured in upon him from various quarters; but he insisted on taking a little room in the house of the gardener of the Convent of the Visitation. It was a comfortless place, being full of draughts, and with a smoky chimney. Francis, however, maintained that it would suit him quite well, and that he wished to be away from the noise of the court.

Here was held the last interview between Jane Frances de Chantal and her holy director. She had been visiting the convents of her order at Dijon and elsewhere, and came to Lyons to advise with him. With difficulty he found time to receive her, such was the press of people who besieged him for counsel and consolation. When, however, he at length was enabled to release himself, the first thing he asked her was, which of the two should begin to speak, as they had out a few hours at liberty. Madame de Chantal, anxious to tell him of her spiritual affairs, said: "I, if you please, father; my heart has great need of being revised by you." He gently reproved her eagerness, as contrary to his favourite lesson of avoiding all excited feelings, all self-will. Madame de Chantal at once shut up the memoranda she had prepared about the state of her soul during the three-and-a-half years which had elapsed since she last had seen the Saint; and she opened instead of them her papers about the Institute. They talked of it for four hours, and Francis de Sales gave her his last instructions for the government of his order; in particular insisting that they should never place themselves under the management of a General, but always be subject to the Bishop of the diocese where they were placed. He then commanded her to visit some convents he mentioned, and dismissed her with his blessing, to meet no more in this life

Among the persons of distinction who frequented the society of Francis at the closing period of his life was Jacques Olier, one of the high magistracy of Lyons, and father of the Jean-Jacques Olier who afterwards became so famous as the founder of St. Sulpice. The latter was at this time still a child, and afforded no promise of his future holiness, being exceedingly self-willed and unmanageable. Yet Francis de Sales predicted, with the utmost confidence, that Almighty God had chosen him for the advantage and glory of the Church, and he bade his parents change their fears into acts of thanksgiving.

There seemed to be an impression amongst all that his end was approaching, and his friends openly expressed to him their belief that he would be canonised. He did not disclaim this, his humility being such as not to be weakened by a consciousness of his own saintliness, unlike many others from whom such knowledge has been withheld. A lady of the court, whom he met at the Princess of Soissons', said: "Really, my lord, if you were in red robes, one would take you for St. Charles." He replied: "Madame, it is of little use to have red robes; but it would be very desirable to be a St. Charles in one's works, if not in one's dress." A Jesuit father, in conversation with him, speaking of the different characteristics of St. Francis of Assisi, St. Francis of Paul, and St. Francis Xavier, he exclaimed: "Yes, either it will cost me my life, or I shall one day be a fourth St. Francis."

It now drew near Christmas; and in spite of his sufferings, he had been toiling in his apostolic ministry with extraordinary energy, preaching wherever he was asked. He said his Midnight-Mass at the Church of the Visitation, and preached on the Nativity with a fervour which surprised all who heard him. The Mère de Blonay was so struck by it, that she ventured to ask him if he had not received some special grace at the Mass, remarking that it seemed to her that she beheld the archangel Gabriel at his side when he

toned the *Gloria in excelsis*. He did not deny that he had heard with his ears the holy melody of the angels, and had seen with his eyes the Divine Infant and those blessed spirits surrounding Him. He then heard the confession of the Prince and Princess of Piedmont, and said the "Aurora" Mass for them in the Dominican church. He then heard three other Masses, and did not say his own third Mass till near mid-day, after which he dined, and then gave the habit to two novices of the Visitation, preached at the ceremony, gave them a conference, received several visitors, and afterwards waited on the Queen Marie de Medicis, who was to leave Lyons the next day. Yet he was actually a dying man when he thus crowded such astonishing exertions into one day. Next day, the Feast of St. Stephen, he bade his last farewell to the nuns of the Visitation, and spoke to them for nearly two hours, chiefly on Divine love, on confession and communion, repeating much of those practical lessons by which he throughout his life had imparted to so many minds the means of obtaining serenity and repose. It grew late, and his servants came with torches to light him to his house. Obedience called him, he said, and he must go. The Superioress asked him, before he departed, to tell them what he wished should remain most deeply engraven in their hearts. "My dear daughter," replied the dying bishop, "*desire nothing, refuse nothing*. Enough is said in that word." And he illustrated it by the example of the Infant Jesus in the crib, receiving poverty, and nakedness, and cold, without stretching forth His hands to ask for any thing; leaving Himself entirely to the care of His Mother, yet not refusing her alleviations, nor those of St. Joseph, nor the adoration of the kings; yet all with an equal indifference. "But, my lord," said one of the nuns, "ought one to warm oneself when one feels very cold?" The simplicity of the question only brings out with the greater clearness the depth and practical wisdom of his answer: "When the fire is lit," he replied, "we see that obedience intends one to warm

oneself, provided it be not done with too great eagerness." Thus in his last words he expressed the great maxim which he preached throughout his life, to avoid *empressement*, to observe a certain holy equality and serenity of mind, to accept and to do with calmness and thankfulness what Divine Providence intends for us at the moment, and to avoid that flurry, that haste, that over anxiety, so natural to human frailty, ever pressing forward in advance of God's will. "Step by step," was his philosophy; and it was taught him by the Spirit of Truth.

Next morning was the Feast of St. John the Evangelist. He felt his sight weaker when he rose, and remarked to his attendants it was a symptom of his departure. He confessed, said Mass, and gave communion to the nuns. The Superioress noticed his altered looks; he only observed that every thing turns out well to those who love God, and in giving her his blessing said, "Adieu, my daughter; I leave you my spirit and my heart." Outside the church he talked for some time with the Duke of Bellegarde and another nobleman. It was cold and foggy, and he felt a chill, in spite of which he went on to call on the Prince of Piedmont. By the time he got home he was excessively fatigued and ill; but sat down to write letters, and received several visitors. On their departure his servant came in, and began to tell him about a sermon he had been hearing, in which the preacher exhorted the queen to love her servants. Francis, like our Lord, said, "And you, do you love me well?" The good servant could not speak for weeping. The Saint continued: "And I, too, love you well; but let us love God more, who is our Great Master." As he said these words he fainted away; and an apoplexy soon after came on, with symptoms of the most alarming kind. He was removed to bed, and remedies adopted in order to rouse him. He retained his consciousness, and frequently repeated the acts of faith, hope, charity, and contrition. He made his profession of faith, and after it said, "I wish

to die in the faith of the Church Catholic, apostolic and Roman, the only good religion; so I swear it and I profess it." in the course of the day he confessed, and asked to receive Extreme Unction, which they gave him about one o'clock in the morning; but without the Viaticum, in consequence of his sickness. He then made them place his chaplet on his arm, and blest medals were attached to it, which he had brought from Rome and Loretto. Next morning he received several visitors, the Bishop of Damascus, the Duke of Nemours, and Madame Olier and her children.

His former director, Father Forrier, having asked him if he remembered him, he replied, "*Si oblitus fuero tui, oblivioni detur dextera mea.*" "If I forget thee, let my right hand be forgotten." The good priest invited him to say, like St. Martin, "Lord, if I am still necessary to Thy people, I refuse not the labour." The Saint, in reply, repeated thrice, "*Servus inutilis, inutilis, inutilis.*" "A useless servant, useless, useless." He seems to have replied to almost every question in the words of Scripture, generally the Psalms. Frequently he uttered that passage of the Canticles: "*Indica mihi, dilecte mi, ubi pascas et cubes in meridie.*" "Show me, O Thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest, where Thou liest in the mid-day."

The symptoms, however, got worse: he constantly relapsed into drowsiness; and to remove this, the physicians resorted to all the expedients used in the barbarous surgery of that age; not only blisters on the head, but the application of a hot iron to the nape of the neck, and even of an instrument shaped like a button, heated red-hot, and pressed on the crown of his head till it was burnt to the very bone. The saintly patient bore all this cruel torture with the most perfect serenity, calling on the dear names of Jesus and Mary. As might be expected, he gradually sunk after sufferings so excruciating; yet the few words he still uttered were all of them worthy of record. A nun who was in attendance, thinking to gratify him, told him his brother, the Bishop

of Chalcedon, had arrived, which was not true. He said to her, 'My sister, one should never tell lies.' When asked if he was not so ry to part with his daughters of the Visitation, just when the institution was at its commencement, he said thus, "*Qui cepit opus, ipse perficiet, perficiet, perficiet.*" "He who hath begun the work will perfect it, will perfect it, will perfect it;" words which he repeated, after an interval, when he was asked whether he did not fear to be vanquished in the last combat. Then turning to a friend, and grasping his hand, he said, "*Adesperascit, et inclinata est jam dies.*" "It is towards evening, and the day is now far spent." Then, after uttering the Name of Jesus, he lost the power of speech, the faint movement of lips and eyes still indicating that his soul was in prayer. Those present now knelt down, and recited the "Recommendation for a departing soul." When they came to the invocation, "*Omnes Sancti Innocentes, orate pro eo,*" "All ye Holy Innocents, pray for him," they repeated it twice, in honour of the festival. At the third invocation he breathed forth his innocent soul with the utmost tranquillity and sweetness, dying at eight o'clock in the evening, on the Feast of the Holy Innocents, December 28th, 1622, in the fifty-sixth year of his age and the twentieth of his episcopate.

His death was supernaturally made known on the same day to several of his friends at a distance. Madame de Chantal, whilst praying for him, heard an interior voice saying to her, "He is no more;" words which at the time she took to signify his life being absorbed in God. Charles Auguste de Sales had been so afflicted at his departure, that he fell sick and was believed to be past recovery. On the Feast of the Holy Innocents, however, a sweet sleep suddenly came on him, during which he dreamed that the bishop had come from Lyons to bless and to heal him. On waking, he exclaimed that his uncle was dead. A holy priest at Annecy, whilst celebrating Mass, saw the face of Francis de Sales surrounded with rays, and knew in his own mind that

he had departed ; and the same revelation was made to Noel Pergord, an advocate at the court of Chambéry, in a dream, in which he beheld a dove of dazzling whiteness hover round him, when he heard a voice say, "I may not touch the earth any longer;" and the dove immediately flew towards the sky. Other holy souls had similar revelations.

When the body of the holy prelate was opened to be embalmed, the operators found in the gall, which was completely dried up, a great quantity of small stones, some round and others triangular, heaped together in the form of a chaplet. The physicians ascribed this phenomenon to the constant violence he had used in subduing his anger, to which passion he was naturally inclined. His heart, after being placed in a silver coffer, was given to the Church of the Visitation at Lyons. His body, after some opposition raised by the authorities of Lyons, was brought to Annecy, where it was received by the whole population with extraordinary veneration. It was magnificently enshrined in the Church of the Visitation, and has ever since been considered the choicest possession of the city. At the time of the first French Revolution, when churches in almost all quarters of France and the adjoining countries were ransacked by the impious and sacrilegious hands of the infidels, some devout Catholics, to guard against the danger of these holy relics being insulted, secretly removed them from their tomb, leaving another body in the silver shrine instead of him,—a proceeding which may be used in illustration of the well-known controversy about the relics of St. Cuthbert at Durham. Soon after the Concordat in 1804, the Bishop of Chambéry verified the document in which the facts were stated by these courageous persons at the time of the transference ; and he exposed the relics to public veneration. In 1806 they were removed with great solemnity to the cathedral church of St. Peter's at Annecy ; and on Aug. 21, 1853, they were finally translated to the Church of the Visitation, which had been rebuilt by Maria Christina, Queen

of Sardinia. The ceremony was of such magnificence as to show that the spirit of Francis de Sales still prevailed with all his ancient power over the land he had loved so well. The king and queen were present; nine bishops and 532 priests assisted at the functions; and the concourse of people who flocked to Annecy to venerate the holy relics on that day, and through the octave, was declared to amount to 36,000. The splendid silver shrine in which the relics were placed was contributed by those of the family of Sales who had survived the storms of the revolution. It is interesting to add, that it was a descendant of that noble house, the Countess of Divonne, who afforded hospitality not many years since to the worthy successor of Francis, Monsignor de Marilley, Bishop of Lausanne and Geneva, when exiled from his see by the infidel government of the latter city.

The general voice of the faithful, as was to be expected, began immediately after his death to invoke the intercession of Francis; and miracles of the most astonishing kind continually attested his title to be ranked among the Saints. Limbs distorted from infancy were made straight; sight was restored to the blind; diseases at which the beholders shuddered were completely banished; the dead were restored to life by his power with Almighty God. The assembly of the French clergy in 1625 addressed to Pope Urban VIII. a letter soliciting his beatification, and reiterated this petition on four occasions, up to the year 1661. Great exertions were made by Jane Frances de Chantal to urge forward the cause, and bring evidence as to his life and miracles. The inquiry, which was unusually exact and extensive, was intrusted to a committee, consisting of her brother, the Archbishop of Bourges, the Bishop of Belley, and a doctor of Louvain, George Namus. As continually happens in similar cases, difficulties interfered with the prosecution of the cause, and were singularly removed by the providence of Almighty God. It was reserved for Alexander VII., formerly Cardinal Chigi, whose great

career had been foretold to him by the Saint himself, to place this resplendent light upon the altars of the Church. His beatification was announced in 1662, and his canonisation in 1665 by the same Pope, who appointed Jan. 29th to be observed as the festival of St. Francis de Sales.



CHAPTER XIII.

CHARACTER OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALER.

In concluding this outline, it will be interesting to review in general the character of the Saint, as it appears from the details we have given, and from those abundant sources of information which our limits have enabled us scarcely to do more than indicate. It is, of course, obvious to any one, that the leading feature of his character was the most exquisite, invincible sweetness. He was sweetness itself: he might almost have been styled that quality itself invested with a visible form; and the elegance of his appearance and air was the fit expression of the serenity which dwelt within. This sweetness, however, seems not so much to have been the result of natural disposition, as of long efforts and watchfulness over himself. He spent years in acquiring it, and for a long time hardly thought of any thing else. The philosopher Seneca tells us that no one can hope completely to subdue any natural failing; but he may so far bring it within bounds, that no one but the person himself shall be aware of its existence. Grace can effect wonders unknown in the sphere of simply natural virtues; but the remark holds good to this extent, that the natural failing will be the trial destined to bring out the peculiar excellence which the character ought to possess. We often see, moreover, in the mind a singular balance of opposite qualities, intended by the Creator to limit each other, and to afford the soul the means of developing its special grace. Thus it was in the case of our Saint. The very last failing under which he might have been imagined to suffer, was that of anger; and yet he assured the Bishop of Belley that this was one of his severest temptations. There were two passions he felt assail him the most strongly, anger and love. The latter he could

subdue by management, by giving it a right and holy direction; but as for anger, he had "to take his heart in both hands," in order to stifle it. We have seen the same expression used some where in St. Francis's works, in advising a person as to the proper way of subduing aversions. In the *Introduction to a Devout Life*, he gives some precepts of great interest and value on the proper means of restraining anger, which show that this metaphor of "taking the heart in both hands" must be understood on what we may call the Salesian principle of calmness, and the absence of any thing like flurry and haste. He says: "But how am I to repel anger? you will say to me. It is necessary, my Philothea, that at the first feeling you have of it you should promptly collect your forces, not by any means roughly or impetuously, but sweetly, and nevertheless seriously. For as one sees in the audiences of many senates and parliaments, that the beadles crying 'Silence! silence!' make more noise than those whom they wish to hold their peace, so it happens full oft that, wishing with impetuosity to repress our anger, we raise more trouble in our heart than the anger itself had done, and the heart, being thus troubled, can no more be master of itself." He then goes on to advise that ejaculations should be made to Almighty God to calm the storm. But observes that "the prayer made against present and pressing anger ought always to be practised, sweetly, tranquilly, and not violently." Another rule which accompanies this is, that the very moment you perceive you have committed an act of anger, you should "repair the fault by an act of sweetness, exercised promptly towards the same person against whom you were irritated. For as a sovereign remedy against lying is at once to recal the lie the moment you perceive you have said it, so it is a good remedy against anger to repair it suddenly by a contrary act of sweetness; for, as they say, fresh wounds are most easily remedied." Lastly, he gives this most useful precept: "When you are in tranquillity, and without any subject of anger, lay in

great store of sweetness and meekness, uttering all your words and performing all your actions, little and great, in the sweetest manner you possibly can." One translator renders this, "so as to be able to utter all your words," &c.; but this is quite missing the point of the passage. St. Francis means, that in tranquil hours we should acquire a habit of gentleness, by speaking and acting gently, and then in moments of temptation we shall be better able to resist the assaults of anger.

There are many most beautiful stories in the *Esprit*, which appear to us to justify St. Francis's own account of his character. His gentleness was of too positive a kind to allow one to suppose it was merely caused by the absence of the element of anger in his mind. Anger, or whatever principle it is on which the sterner virtues depend, he doubtless had; but this was kept in the most perfect subjection by the action of grace on his affectionate heart and clear serene reason. The same combination, aided by his illustrious birth and early familiarity with high life, even had grace not formed his whole manner, would doubtless of itself have made him one of the most finished gentlemen of the age. There is something exceedingly chivalrous in his character, which meets one curiously now and then throughout his works. For example, in the *Introduction*, how redolent is the following passage of the days of Christian chivalry: "The blessed Elzear, Count of Arian, in Provence, having been long absent from his devout and chaste Delphina, she sent him an express to hear news of his health, and he made reply to her: 'I am right well, my dear wife; but if you would see me, seek me in the wound of the Side of our sweet Jesus; for 'tis there where I dwell, and where you will find me: elsewhere you will seek me in vain.' This was a Christian knight indeed." (*Introd.* ii. 12.) The readers of the Life of St. Francis of Assisi will recollect that beautiful passage where that great mediæval Saint, in his early youth, dreamed he was in a vast hall hung round with rich armour; and every helm and corset and buckler bore

on it the stamp of the cross. In the life of his namesake, St. Francis de Sales, we find traces of this martial spirit, which is so nobly worked out in the *Spiritual Exercises*. Such is that scene where, when a guest in early life at the Bishop of Geneva's, he was invited to sit, layman as he was, and girt with his sword, in an assembly of ecclesiastics, and solved subtle questions in theology, on which the wisest there could not agree. Such, too, is that other beautiful anecdote we have already given of his travelling with his preceptor in the forest of Sonnaz, when his sword and scabbard thrice fell from his baldrick, and formed the figure of a cross upon the ground. The whole picture of the old priest and the youthful noble riding in the forest, his eye arrested by the sign of the cross accidentally formed by the sword, and his tracing in the occurrence an indication of God's will—all leads one to those soft and holy scenes we meet with, in the midst of so much of a different character, in such a romance as the *Mort d'Arthur*.

When we reflect that, to a naturally pure and noble disposition, there was in St. Francis de Sales added that dignity, which among his class in old Europe before the revolutionary times was almost a second nature, and that this was the material which Divine grace moulded into a supernatural form, and seemed to rejoice in lavishing its richest ornaments upon it, we can well fancy that the result must have been something extraordinary. People imagine St. Francis de Sales' character to have been marked chiefly by a sort of sugary and somewhat cloying sweetness. We have shown what a mistake this is. There is a sweetness which is the result of a certain childishness of mind, and which becomes fretfulness the moment really trying circumstances appear. His was the disciplined sweetness of a gracious soul, at peace with itself and full of the light of heaven. Had it been any thing else, people would not have stood in awe of him as they did. The Bishop of Belley, who observed him with more than the vigilance and accuracy

of a Boswell, writes on this subject in singularly striking terms, which are worth quoting at length. "Our Saint," he says, "with this aid of grace, knew how to unite in himself these two admirable qualities of gravity and sweetness. He knew how to accompany with so much affability and sweetness that ray of majesty and honour which grace diffused over his brow, that you would have said it was a Moses, who was veiling his luminous visage to converse familiarly with his brethren. If he had attractions to make himself loved, he had also so much gravity and modesty that one could not choose, but fear, or at least respect him; but with a respect so full of love, that I know many people who trembled on approaching him, not so much for fear of displeasing him (for nothing displeased him, and the modest were always well received by him), but for fear of not pleasing him enough. I have known persons of high quality, whose ordinary conversation was with the greatest princes and princesses, who declared to me that they composed themselves with more attention when they were in his presence than they did when in the presence of those gods of the earth; it being their opinion that God had set in his visage a ray of His light, which penetrated them even to the heart." (*Esprit*, xiv. 7.)

Of this dignity of demeanour, which is indeed a quality more rarely to be found than greatness of mind, the Bishop of Belley gives a most curious illustration. Having made it his business to watch Francis, and note down all his sayings and customs, it occurred to the good bishop that it would be extremely interesting to know how Francis conducted himself when alone. He resorted to a very simple expedient to discover this, which he relates with much *naïveté*. "I must here tell you one of my tricks. When he came to see me at my residence, and to pass his usual octave there, which he never failed to do every year, I had purposely made holes in certain places, to watch him when he was retired alone in his chamber, to see how he carried himself in study, at prayer, in reading, in meditation, in

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sitting, in walking, in lying-down, in rising, in writing and, to be brief, in the most trifling occasions wherein, when alone, one often gives oneself liberty. Nevertheless, I never observed him dispense himself from the most exact law of modesty: such he was alone as in company, such in company as alone; an equality of bodily demeanour similar to that of his heart. Being alone, he was as composed as if in a great assembly. If he was praying, you would have said he was in the presence of the angels and of all the blessed. Motionless as a dove, and with a countenance full of awe, I even took notice, seeing him by himself, whether he crossed his legs, or whether he placed his knees over each other, or whether he rested his head on his elbow. Never. Always a gravity, accompanied with such a sweetness, that filled all those who looked at him with love and reverence." (*Esprit*, iv. 1.) For such a lesson one can forgive the good bishop for his astonishing infringement of the usual laws of hospitality and good breeding. After all, to have such a person as Francis in the house, was like entertaining a superior being. Other witnesses speak in just the same way. Jane Frances de Chantal, in that beautiful letter in which she describes his character, speaks of "the great splendour of his countenance" when he said Mass; and how, when he carried the Blessed Sacrament in procession, "you would have seen him like a cherubim, all luminous." "O Jesus!" she exclaims, "how admirable was the order which God had placed in that blessed soul! Every thing was so arranged, so calm, and the light of God so clear, that he saw even the least atoms of its movements. That soul was more pure than the sun, and more white than snow, in its actions, in its resolutions, in its designs and affections." And, coming more to the subject of that external grandeur so natural to such a soul, she gives us another key to it in the value the Saint put upon his office as bishop: "As for his dignity," she says, "what honour and respect did he bear to it! Certainly his humility by no means

nindered the exercise of the gravity, majesty, and reverence due to his quality of bishop. My God! might I dare to say it? I say it, if I may: it simply seems to me that my Blessed Father was a living image, in which the Son of God our Lord was painted; for truly, the order and the economy of that holy soul was altogether supernatural and divine."

His natural character had a considerable tinge of the country in which he lived,—simple, beautiful, and yet grand, like the Alpine mountains. He was conscious of a strong predilection for his country, and seems to have delighted in it, and to have felt that it gave him a special influence. Thus, we have seen how touchingly he brings this out in the dedication of his controversial work to the inhabitants of Thonon, where he says that the air of his book is "wholly Savoyard; and it is a salutary recipe and last remedy, since it is the return to your native air." This beautiful metaphor must have gone to the hearts of those to whom it was addressed. The Catholic Church was their native home, whither they should retire to be refreshed, as with the cool mountain-breezes of their infancy. Writing to the governor of Savoy, to remove some jealousy that the Duke might feel in the then state of affairs between Savoy and France, in consequence of a visit he had made to Lyons, Francis says, "I am essentially a Savoyard, both I and all mine; and I could never be any thing else." It is interesting to notice all this, because of the refutation it gives to the notion that Catholicity interferes with the warmest attachment to country and kindred. He loved his own people, and was thoroughly at home with them. The very boatmen on the Lake of Annecy called him "Father." In a charming chapter of the *Esprit*, where the Bishop of Belley tells us of a sailing excursion they had on the lake, we read how he was reproved by Francis when he wanted the boatmen to call the holy prelate "My Lord" instead of the endearing name of "Father." His works and conversations abound in illustrations derived from the

Alpine scenery. The following is a very pleasing instance. Writing to a friend, he says: "I protest to you, that on receiving your letter, it seemed to me that I was gathering flowers of incomparable sweetness on the summits of our mountains, where I then was." Again, in relating the history of a visitation he had made through his diocese: "I even found God full of sweetness and gentleness among our highest and roughest mountains, where many simple souls were cherishing and adoring Him in all truth and sincerity; and the roes and chamois were running hither and thither amidst the frightful glaciers to proclaim His praises: it is true that, for want of devotion, I only understood a few words of their languages; but it seemed to me that they said beautiful things. Your St. Augustine would have understood them well if he had been there." In the same letter he relates the deep impression he received from an accident that had taken place "in this country of the glaciers" during his journey. A shepherd was going about the glaciers to recover a stray heifer; he missed his footing, and fell into a deep crevasse; people came to rescue him; and one of his neighbours caused himself to be lowered by a cord down the frightful precipice, where he found the poor man dead and frozen; and they drew him up in all haste, with the corpse in his arms, lest he too should perish in the icy chasm. The Saint is profoundly struck with every circumstance: the shepherd wandering about those terrible paths to regain one stray heifer; his eagerness in the pursuit, which makes him forget his own safety; the alacrity of his neighbour, who descends into the abyss that he may rescue his friend from his peril. It was like a parable of our Lord's in actual life. He does not enlarge on it, but says simply, "*Quel aiguillon pour moi, ma chère fille!*" One sees the influence of the scenery upon his style; his fondness for introducing metaphors from the frequent changes of the atmosphere in a mountainous region; from the vintages, from bees, from birds, from flowers, and similar natural objects,

of which he was evidently a great observer. One curious characteristic of his style is his habit of drawing illustrations from the senses of taste and smell, of which a familiar instance has passed from his writings into many religious books; we allude to that of making up from his morning's meditation a spiritual bouquet with which to refresh himself during the day. Another favourite set of comparisons he draws from the old treatises of natural history, in which he seems to have taken great delight, such as the legends about the halcyon, the birds of Paradise, the formation of pearls from the dew-drops, and imagery of that fanciful yet beautiful description. Occasionally there is a most poetic spirit in his illustrations; for example, in the preface to the *Treatise on the Love of God*, where he compares the pleasing effect produced on his mind, amidst the pressure of business, by always keeping before him the plan of some pious treatise or other, to the repose which engravers and jewellers find is afforded to their wearied eyes, by looking from time to time on some beautiful emerald. This sweetness of style, however, does not deceive us; for in every page he shows so keen an insight into the heart, that he keeps us, as were, in awe, whilst he attracts us by his gentleness. This is singularly shown in a set of questions for self-examination to be found among his smaller treatises, where the shortness and the simplicity of his questions, coming straight to the conscience like the piercing of a sword, show one that Francis de Sales, with all his gentleness, was not a man to be trifled with, and that his sweetness in reality derives its essential character from that burning hatred for sin with which one who loved God so ardently was of necessity imbued.

His life possesses the charm of singular unity. Many holy men have fallen in some period of their lives, and have exhibited wonderful examples of the power of penance to bring back holiness even greater than innocence. Many good men, without being betrayed into actual sin, have yet strayed more or less

from the path originally intended for them by Divine Providence, have taken inconsiderate steps, and embarrassed their career. But there is in the life of Francis de Sales a completeness and harmony, which distinguishes it no less from the class of heroic penitents than from the chequered scene of mistakes and corrections, a falling and rising again, which characterises the life of most men. He never lost baptismal innocence; each great action of his life is preceded, accompanied, and followed by prayer. His days are full; he does all things "passionately well," infusing into the calmness and deliberateness of a course which never steps an inch in advance of God's will, an intensity far greater than the vehemence which highly-excited feelings could impart to those who act from merely natural motives.

In these times, and to Protestant readers, his life and works are peculiarly instructive, for this reason, that whilst none can deny his singular holiness, it is equally impossible to deny that that holiness was from beginning to end the product of the most complete faith in the teaching of the Catholic Church. It must always be remembered, remarked an Anglican paper,* in reviewing a volume of translations from his works which appeared some time since (*Practical Piety set forth by St. Francis de Sales*), "that St. Francis de Sales was a thorough Roman Catholic." Nothing can be more true. Whilst it would be easy for Anglicans to "adapt" his writings, or considerable parts of them, as Thomas à Kempis may be abridged or altered, it could never be concealed, that such characteristics as the most tender devotion to the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph, and to the relics of Saints, the continual application of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and the presence of that sacrificial view of daily actions which is derived from it, the constant recollection of the suffering Church in purgatory, the devotion to the Five Blessed Wounds and to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and, in fine,

* The Guardian.

all that people consider as most distinctively "Roman Catholic," pervades the whole of his teaching and works, as much as they do those of St. Philip Neri and his disciples. His life is thus one great testimony to the truth of Catholicity, inasmuch as it all hangs indissolubly together, and you cannot separate his charity from his faith. If these few notices, aided by the powerful intercession of the Blessed Saint, lead even one soul to perceive the force of this argument, or in any way promote the study of the teaching of St. Francis, or extend more widely the devotion towards him, richly indeed will the writer feel that his labours have been rewarded.



SELECTIONS

FROM THE

'SPIRIT OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES,'

BY THE BISHOP OF BELLEY.

It has been our good fortune to have had transmitted to us more abundant memorials of this most sweet and charming Saint than perhaps of any other in the calendar. What with his writings and letters, we seem to have a thorough and familiar acquaintance with every lineament of his character; while, to complete the portrait, we enjoy the benefit of the reminiscences of a contemporary and intimate friend, John Pierre Camus, Bishop of Belley, himself remarkable for a high degree of sanctity, and upon whom St. Francis had laid his holy hands in consecration.

From the work containing these recollections, entitled "The Spirit of St. Francis de Sales," and which is usually prefixed to the Saint's writings, a few selections have been made, as forming an appropriate complement to his life. As M. de Belley adopted no systematic plan in the memorial of his friend's virtues which he has bequeathed to us, so neither will it be necessary to follow him in the exact order which he has chanced to observe. Forced by limited space to make a selection,*

* The extracts have been put together, under the direction of one of the Editors of the series, by way of an Appendix to Dr. Ormsby's Life of the Saint.

the translator has therefore thought it best to group the passages in their most natural connection.

THE SAINT'S SWEETNESS, CHARITY, AND PRACTICE OF
FRATERNAL CORRECTION.

The spirit of St. Francis was pre-eminently a spirit of sweetness—*super mel dulcis*; that supernatural sweetness which is, as it were, the cream and the flower of charity. But its preciousness is best felt when exhibited in combination and harmony with those other Christian virtues and graces which the Saint possessed in so eminent a degree; for such is one of the distinguishing marks of supernatural virtue, that its prominence never implies any opposite defect, but the very reverse; whereas it is seldom that any purely natural quality, when very remarkable, is not accompanied by some at least slight defect in what may be called the counterbalancing quality. It is as though one pole could not be raised without the depression of its opposite. The quotations which follow will exhibit this beautiful harmony in the Saint's character.

Of the high esteem in which St. Francis held the virtue of gentleness, we have an example in the following anecdote related by M. de Belley :

"A young man was once brought to him for the purpose of receiving a severe reprimand; nevertheless, he spoke to him with his habitual sweetness, and perceiving the youth's obduracy, he only shed tears, remarking that his hard and unyielding heart would bring him to a bad end. Being told that his mother had cursed him, he said, 'Oh! this is sad indeed. If the poor woman is taken at her word, in vain will she afterwards curse her own curse. Unhappy mother of a still more wretched son!'

"The Saint proved too true a prophet; for the youth perished, not long after, in a miserable duel; his body

became the prey of dogs and wolves, and his mother died of grief.

"In reply to those who found fault with him for having reprov'd with too much gentleness on this occasion, he said, 'What would you have had me do? I did my best to arm myself with an anger free from sin; I took my heart in both my hands [a favourite expression of the Saint's, as has been seen], and I had not the resolution to throw it at his head. But, truth to say, I was afraid of letting that little drop of meekness, which it has taken me twenty-two years' labour to store up like dew in the vessel of my heart, run off in a quarter of an hour. The bees are several months making a little honey, which a man will swallow down in a mouthful. Besides, what is the use of speaking when we are not listened to? This youth was inaccessible to remonstrances, for the light of his eyes—his judgment, I mean—was not with him. I should have done him no good, and myself, perhaps, much harm,—like one who is drowned in his attempt to save another. Charity must be prudent and judicious.'"

It was indeed, however, that the heart of the sinner was proof against his gentleness. Among other anecdotes of a like nature, the Bishop relates the following:

"While engaged in one of his diocesan visitations, great complaints were made to him of an ecclesiastic who gave scandal by his life, and whose habits but ill accorded with the theological science for which he was remarkable. This ecclesiastic presented himself before the holy prelate with as much boldness as if he had been perfectly innocent of all that had been laid to his charge, and loudly treated the matter as a calumny. The Saint gave him a very gracious reception, characterised by his accustomed benignity; but when he beheld the effrontery with which the offender justified himself, he blushed in his presence. The very change of countenance, unaccompanied by any other correction, touched the heart of this impenitent sinner. He

resolved to disarm his judge by confession, and begged the holy Bishop to hear him in the tribunal of penance. Immediately, not an ear only, but still more a heart, was open to him, and he came out of this health-giving pool like Naaman from the waters of the Jordan; his face suffused with that holy shame which conducts to glory.

" 'Well, monseigneur,' he said, 'what think you of the greatest sinner upon earth?' 'That God has poured His abundant mercy on you,' replied the holy man; 'you are all resplendent with grace in my eyes.' 'But you know what I really am,' he rejoined. 'You are such as I have said.' 'I mean, what I have been.' 'Of that,' replied the Saint, 'I have no recollection. Why should I keep up the memory of what God has consigned to oblivion? Would you take me for that Pharisee who esteemed Magdalen according to what she had been, not according to what she was when washing her Saviour's feet with her tears? And to prove to you,' he added, 'that I look upon you as replenished with heavenly graces, of which your heart has received a full measure and running over, I beg you to make me a partaker of it by giving me your blessing.' So saying, he threw himself at the ecclesiastic's feet, to the exceeding great confusion of the latter. 'No,' said the Saint, 'I am in earnest; I entrust you to render me the same office I have performed for you, and to hear my confession.' The other refused, but he constrained him to acquiesce; and it is impossible to express how greatly he was edified thereby. And further to convince him that he was perfectly sincere in the esteem he professed for him, he made his confession to him two or three times consecutively in sight of the public, who scarcely knew which to admire most, the prodigious humility of the saintly Bishop, or the miraculous conversion of the ecclesiastic.

"One day a person came to him to confession who detailed his sins with so much boldness, not to say impudence, and with such a total want of all feeling or

compunction, that he might have been supposed to be narrating a story, and to be even listening to himself discoursing with a certain self-complacency. The Saint, who, from the tone in which the penitent spoke, knew the inward indisposition of his soul, since of the three conditions for the sacrament of penance he brought but one, confession, and that of a very imperfect kind, being devoid of that modesty and holy shame which ought to accompany it, without interrupting his narration, began to weep and sigh and sob. The other asked him what was the matter, and if he was ill. 'Alas! my brother,' he replied, 'I am very well, thank God; but you are very ill.' The other boldly answered that he too was in good health. 'Well,' said the holy man, 'go on.' The man continued, in the same off-hand manner, relating shocking things without any sense of sorrow, and the Saint's tears redoubled. Again the penitent asked him what he was weeping for. 'Alas!' he replied, 'I weep because you weep not.' He who had been insensible to the first prick—the hour of grace, as we have reason to believe, having now come—was not callous to the second; and the rock, struck by this rod, suddenly giving forth water, he exclaimed, 'O wretched man that I am! who feel no sorrow for my enormous sins, which draw tears from him who is innocent.' So powerfully was he touched, that he was very near fainting, had not the Saint consoled him; then instructing him how to make his act of contrition, which the penitent performed with wonderful compunction, he put him in a proper state to receive the grace of the sacrament. From that moment this man gave himself entirely to God, and became a model of penance.

"The penitent confided all this to one of his intimate friends (who related the circumstance without mentioning the individual's name), but with the addition of the following rather pleasing remark: 'Other confessors,' he said, 'sometimes make their penitents weep; but as for me, I made my confessor weep. It

is true, he paid it me back to the full ; and God grant, for my soul's salvation, that the change may have been genuine, and that I may never lose the grace which his benediction then conferred upon me.' "

Here is an instance of his leniency to offenders :

" An ecclesiastic belonging to his diocese had been imprisoned for some scandalous offence. The Saint was urgently entreated by his officers to allow him to be punished as the law enjoined. His gentleness accordingly submitted to compulsion, and he let them have their way. Besides the penances which the culprit had to undergo in prison, he was interdicted from all ecclesiastical functions for six months. So far from being amended by this treatment, he, on the contrary, grew worse, and it was found necessary to deprive him of his benefice and expel him from the diocese. While in prison no one could seem more docile, more humble, and more penitent ; he wept, he entreated, he promised, he protested. When threatened with being deprived of his benefice, he promised to amend ; but after having eluded justice so many times, he found the door of mercy closed against him. Some months afterwards, another ecclesiastic was imprisoned for faults no less serious. The officers wished to treat him similarly, and hinder him from having recourse to the mercy of the blessed Francis, his bishop, to whom he was continually appealing, protesting that he was willing to give up his charge, provided it were at his feet, confident that he would be able to read the sincerity of his repentance in his eyes. The Saint commanded him to be brought before him. His officers objected. ' Well,' he said, ' if you will not let him appear before me, you cannot forbid my appearing before him. You will not allow him to leave his prison, suffer me, then, to enter within its walls and share his captivity with him. We must indeed console this dear brother who calls upon us. I give you my word that he shall not come forth without your consent.' He accordingly visited him in his prison, accompanied by his officers. Scarcely did

he beheld this miserable man at his feet, when he fell upon his neck, bathed in tears, and lovingly embraced and kissed him; then, turning to his officers, 'Is it possible,' he said to them, 'that you do not perceive that God has already forgiven this man? Is there any condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus? If God justifies him, who is he that shall condemn him? Assuredly not I. Go, my brother,' he said to the guilty man,—'go in peace, and sin no more; I know that you are truly penitent.' The officers told him he was a hypocrite; that the former offender, whom it had been found necessary to depose, made much stronger demonstrations of repentance than this one. 'Perhaps,' rejoined the Saint, 'he would have been truly converted if you had treated him with more lenity. Have a care lest his soul may be asked at your hands some day. As for me, I am willing to be security for this man, if you will accept of me as such. I am persuaded that his heart is truly touched; and if he is deceiving me, he will injure himself more than me.' The offender, bursting into tears, begged that any penance judged fitting should be laid upon him in prison; that he was prepared for any thing, his sorrow giving him more pain than any penance could; and that he would himself voluntarily resign his benefice, if the Bishop thought proper. 'I should be very sorry you should do so,' replied the Saint; 'the more so, as I hope that, even as the falling steeple crushed the church by the scandal it gave, so, replaced upon its base, it shall henceforth adorn it by its virtues.' The officers yielded, and the prison-doors were thrown open. After being suspended *à divinis* for a month, he resumed the exercise of his charge, in which he subsequently gave so holy an example, that the Saint's prediction was fulfilled. As the conversation turned one day in his presence upon the perversion of the one and the conversion of the other, he uttered these memorable words: 'Better make penitents by gentleness than hypocrites by severity.'"

Zeal was consequently a virtue which he regarded

with much suspicion : " Keeping peacocks," he would say, " good managers tell us, costs more in a country-place than it profits ; for although they devour spiders, caterpillars, mice, and such-like vermin, on the other hand they injure roofs, scare away the pigeons by their screams, and beat the other fowls."

" Speaking of fraternal correction," says M. de Belley, " our blessed Francis often gave me an important lesson ; I say often, because he repeated and inculcated it frequently, that he might imprint it deeply on my memory. This excellent maxim may be useful to all, but especially to those who rule or who have the charge of others. ' That truth,' he said, ' which is not charitable proceeds from a charity which is not true.' A faithful saying, worthy to be received and deeply pondered.

" He had been informed, by the sure report of witnesses who had both heard and seen what they related, that when I entered on my episcopal charge I manifested, in my diocesan visits, a zeal both severe and excessive, or, to speak more clearly, which was deficient both in discretion and in science ; and that in this spirit I administered harsh reproofs couched in bitter words. He one day seized a proper opportunity, with his accustomed prudence, discretion, and skill, which were no less admirable than his gentleness, to insinuate into my mind this golden saying, which has ever since remained so deeply engraven there that I have never forgotten it.

" I asked our Saint, one day, how we might be able to recognise whether the correction we gave proceeded from charity. He replied, with that solidity of judgment which served as a guide to all his actions and as a light to all his words, ' Truth proceeds from charity when we speak it only from the love of God and for the good of him whom we reprove. It is better to be silent than to speak a truth ungraciously ; for this would be to present a good dish badly cooked, or to administer medicine unseasonably.' ' But is not this to detain truth a prisoner unjustly?' ' Certainly

not: to act otherwise would be to bring it forth unjustly; because the real justice of truth, and the truth of justice, resides in charity. A judicious silence is always preferable to an uncharitable truth.

"On another occasion, inquiring of our Saint for some other mark by which we might know when a reproof was animated by charity, he, whose heart was (so to say) altogether steeped in sweetness, replied, according to the spirit of the great Apostle, 'When it is made in the spirit of meekness (Gal. vi. 1). Gentleness is, in fact, the great friend of charity, and its inseparable companion.' He recommended the imitation of the good Samaritan, who poured oil and wine into the poor man's wounds. It was a favourite saying with him, that to make a good salad there should be more oil than vinegar or salt.

"Here is another of his remarkable sayings on this subject, which he repeated to me several times: 'Be as gentle always as possible; and remember that a will catch more flies with a spoonful of honey than with a hundred barrels of vinegar; if we must fall into one extreme or the other, let it be into that of sweetness, no sauce was ever spoiled by too much sugar. Such is the nature of the human mind, it rebels against severity, but gentleness renders it amenable to every thing. A soft word appeases anger, as water extinguishes fire. No soil so ungrateful but kindness can make it bear fruit. To speak truths sweetly is to throw burning coals, or rather roses, into a person's face. How can any one be angry with another who fights him with pearls and diamonds? Reproof is in its nature a harsh thing; but cooked in sweetness, and so roasted at the fire of charity, it becomes a pleasant and delicious cordial.'

"'But,' said I, 'truth is always truth, however it may be spoken, or however it may be received;' and I armed myself with that text of St. Paul to Timothy. *Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine*

(2 Tim. iv 2). 'The pith of this apostolic lesson,' he replied, 'consists in these two words, *in all patience and doctrine*. Doctrine signifies truth, and this truth is to be spoken with all patience; that is to say, we must endure repulse, and not fancy that it is always to be received with applause; for if the Son of God was an object of contradiction, His doctrine, which is that of truth, must be signed with the same mark. Every man who would instruct others in the way of justice must make up his mind to bear their caprice and injustice, and to receive ingratitude as his payment.' "

While so careful to avoid the faults into which the practice of this difficult duty is apt to lead, St. Francis well understood and fulfilled the obligation of fraternal correction.

"This good father," observes the Bishop, "often reproved me for my faults; and then he would say, 'I expect you to be very much obliged to me for this; it is the greatest mark of friendship I can give you; and I should look upon it as a proof of your love if you would do the like for me in return. But in this respect I find you very cold; you are too cautious; love has a bandage on its eyes, and is not so nice; it goes straight on without so many reflections. It is because I love you so much, that I cannot endure the least imperfection in you. I should wish my son to be such as St. Paul desired to see Timothy, *blameless*. Things which I should account as flies in one who was not so dear to me, look like elephants in you whom I truly love, as God knows I do. Would not that surgeon be to blame, and be rather cruel than compassionate, who should allow a man to die for want of the resolution to dress his wound? A stroke of the tongue in season is sometimes as profitable for the soul's health as a cut of the lancet for that of the body. It requires sometimes but a judicious bleeding to save a man's life, or a timely reproof to preserve a soul from eternal death.' "

A few examples of St. Francis's loving correction, in which the good Bishop gives himself up to justice in

a most delicious manner, in order to exhibit the merits and illustrate the spirit of his revered father, may prove both instructive and entertaining.

"He had been told that I was extremely long in making my preparation for saying Mass, which was a great inconvenience to every one. Of this he desired to correct me. He had come to see me at Belley, according to our annual custom of visiting each other. It so happened, that while at my house, he had one morning to send off a number of despatches, which detained him in his own room to a late hour. It was nearly eleven o'clock, and he had not yet said Mass, which he never omitted any day, unless he was prevented by illness or other serious impediment. Down he came, then, to the chapel in his rochet and mozetta; and after his morning salutations to the persons he found there, he proceeded to the altar, where he made a short prayer, then vested himself and said Mass. When it was over, he knelt down again, made another short prayer, and rejoined the company with a face so serene that he looked to me like an angel, and continued conversing with us till we were shortly after summoned to table. I, who was in the habit of closely observing all his actions, felt surprised at the briefness of this preparation and thanksgiving. When alone with him that evening, I said to him, with the confidence of a son, 'My father, for a man of your stature, you seem to me to go rather fast. I noticed your preparation and thanksgiving this morning, and thought them both very short.'

"'How much pleasure you give me!'" he exclaimed, embracing me, 'by telling me what you think frankly. For these three or four days I have had something of a like sort on my mind to say to you, and scarcely

* *O Dieu! que vous me faites plaisir!* The exclamation, here and elsewhere, is omitted where in English it would give quite another character to the observation. The name of God is used in French, without the smallest irreverence, on common occasions, where amongst us, it would either impart an air of so-

knew how to introduce the subject. Come, what have you to say for your own lengthinesses, which weary people to death? Everybody makes loud complaints of them; possibly, however, this has never reached your ears, so few persons are there who venture to speak the truth to their prelates. No doubt it is because no one here loves you as well as I do that the commission has been entrusted to me: you may rely upon it I have very sufficient authority to support me without giving up my credentials. A little of your excess would do us both a great deal of good; you would get on somewhat quicker, and I should not go so fast. Is it not a good joke that the Bishop of Belley should reprove the Bishop of Geneva for getting on too fast, and the Bishop of Geneva blame the Bishop of Belley for going too slow? Is not this the world turned upside down? But do just think how little all your fine *agios*, and all those suffrages and acts with which you are busied in your oratory in the sacristy, suit the people who have come to hear your Mass; still less those who are waiting to speak to you on business when Mass is over.' 'But, my father,' I rejoined 'how is one to prepare oneself properly for offering the Holy Sacrifice?' 'Why do you not make your preparation,' he replied, 'early in the morning, when I know, or at least I believe, you never fail in the exercise of prayer?' I told him that in summer I rose at four, and did not say Mass till nine or ten o'clock. 'Do you imagine,' he replied, 'that an interval of four or five hours is a very long space in His eyes with whom a thousand years are but as the day that has passed?' 'But the thanksgiving—what of that?' 'Wait for your evening devotions to make it. Would you not

learnly not in accordance with the intention of the speaker, or strike the ear, perhaps, as an undue familiarity. Whatever may be the cause of this discrepancy between the English and most foreign tongues, it is an indisputable fact, which must be taken into account in translations which would render the true spirit of the originals

indeed, feel it necessary to consider how so important an action had been performed, when making your examination of conscience?—and does not thanksgiving form a part of examen? Both these duties, then, can be discharged, and that with more leisure and tranquillity, in the morning and evening; this puts no one to any inconvenience, and enables you to acquit yourself of them better and more thoroughly, without interfering with the functions belonging to your charge or wearying your neighbour.' 'But,' I still objected, 'will it not have a disedifying effect to see all this despatched so quickly, since God does not wish to be worshipped on the run?' 'We may in vain run,' he said; 'God runs faster than we do. He is a Spirit, who, rising in the east, shines at the same instant in the west. All is present to Him; with Him there is neither past nor future; whither can we go from His Spirit?' I acquiesced in his advice, and have found the advantage of it.

"One day I was complaining to our Saint of some grievous wrong that had been done me. The thing was so very manifest, that he agreed to the truth of what I said. Finding myself so strongly supported, I felt triumphant, and grew very eloquent in dwelling upon the justice of my cause. The Saint, to put a stop to all this superfluous discourse, observed, 'It is true that they were in every way to blame for treating you in this manner; such conduct was quite unworthy of them, particularly towards a man of your condition. I see but one circumstance in the whole affair to your disadvantage.' 'What is that?' I asked. 'That you have but to show your superior wisdom by holding your tongue.' This answer so struck me, that I was silent at once, and had not a word to offer in reply.

"It was his opinion, that the true servant of God seldom complained, and still more rarely desired to be pitied by others; observing that those who complain to their friends, that they may be pitied in return, are like children, who, when they have hurt a finger, are

soothed when their nurse has blown upon it, or pretended to cry too.

"One day I was complaining of some great and notable affront I had received. 'To any one else but yourself,' he replied, 'I should try and administer some soothing dose of consolation; but your rank and the love I bear you dispense me from this little piece of politeness. I have no oil for your wound; perhaps if I tried to assuage it, I might aggravate the inflammation; I have nothing but salt and vinegar to apply to it. You concluded your complaint by saying that it requires a prodigious patience, proof against every thing, to suffer such assaults in silence. Certainly yours is not of a very firm quality, since you make such loud lamentations.' 'But, my father,' I rejoined, 'it is only in your bosom and to the ear of your heart. To whom shall a child have recourse when he is vexed, if not to his kind father?' 'O true child, indeed! how long will you love childishness? Does it become him who is a father to others, to whom God has given the rank of a father in His Church, to play the child himself? St. Paul tells us, that as long as we are children, we may speak as such; but that, when grown up, the stammering tongue which suits a sucking infant is unbecoming in him who is no longer a child. Would you have me give you milk and broth instead of solid meat, and blow upon your hurt like a nurse? Have you not strong enough teeth to chew bread—nay, even hard bread—the bread of affliction? It is a fine thing, indeed, to see you complaining to an earthly father, you who ought to say to your heavenly Father, *I was dumb, and I opened not my mouth, because Thou hast done it.** But you will say, it is not God but men, and the *assembly of the malignant*.† What! can you not discern the permissive will of God, which makes use of the malice of men either to correct you or to exercise you in virtue? Job had more discern

* Ps. xxxviii. 10.

† Ps. lxxii. 2.

ment; for he said, *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away.** He does not say, the devils and the thieves; he looks only to the hand of God, who performs all things by whatever instruments He pleases. You are very far from the spirit of him who said that the rod and staff with which God struck him were his consolation; and that he was as one that was deaf and dumb, who refrained even from good words, which might have served to justify him and prove his innocence. But, my father, will say, since when have you become so severe? Have you changed your gentleness into cruelty? as Job† said, *Where are Thy ancient mercies?* Certainly my compassion is as fresh and new as ever; for God knows if I love you, or if I love myself better than you; and the reproach I make to you is what I should make to my own soul, if it had broken out in the same way. Well, I forgive you, as a matter of indulgence, to use the Apostle's terms; but on condition that you will be more courageous for the future, and shut up such-like favours, when God shall vouchsafe them to you, in the strong box of silence, without letting their perfume evaporate, giving thanks in your heart to your heavenly Father for bestowing upon you a small particle of His Son's cross. What! you take pleasure in wearing a golden cross on your bosom, and you cannot bear a little one on your heart without manifesting it by your complaints? And then, when they escape you, you make a wonderful appeal to patience, and would have me esteem you patient, forsooth, while listening to your lamentations, as if the great effect of patience were to hinder one from taking revenge, and not to stop complaints. But as for that, I do think you commit an error in invoking the aid of so great a power as patience in the insult you have received. It is too noble a second for so contemptible a duel. A little modesty and silence might suffice you.

* Job i. 21.

† "Thou art changed to be cruel toward me." xxx. 9

‡ Ps. lxxxviii. 50



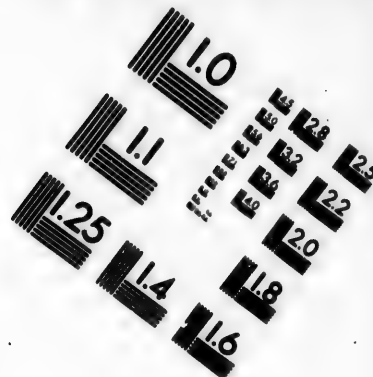
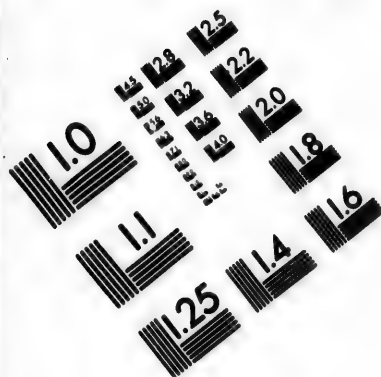
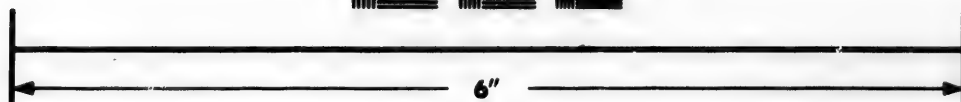
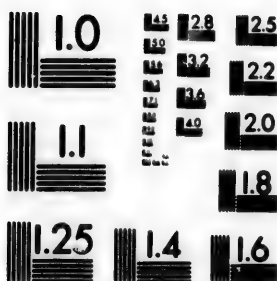


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And so he dismissed me with this brief mortification, but so fortified by my rebuff, that it seemed to me, as I left him, that all the affronts in the world could not have extracted a word from me.

"To a woman who complained to him that whenever her husband enjoyed good health he went to the wars, and that when he was wounded or sick he came back, and was so fretful as to be quite unbearable, he replied, 'What sauce can we find to suit you? When he is well, he cannot bear to stay with you, nor you with him when he is ill. If you loved each other only in God, you would not be subject to these changes; your affection would be always the same, whether absent or present. Beg this grace earnestly of God, otherwise I have little hope that you will enjoy any peace.'"

But if the charity of St. Francis was displayed alike in the sweetness and the sincerity of his reproofs, so also was it manifested in tender regard for the reputation of his neighbour, and in his unwillingness to believe evil of any one.

"His goodness of heart," says M. de Belley, "was so great as to prevent him from thinking ill even of the bad. He did all he could to cover the defects of his neighbour, sometimes alleging human infirmity, sometimes the violence of temptation, sometimes the number of those who were guilty of similar faults. When these sins were so public and evident that it was impossible to throw a veil over them, he took refuge in the future. 'Who knows,' he would say, 'whether he will not be converted? and who are we that we should judge our brethren? If God did not uphold us with His grace, we should do worse, and our souls would already be dwellers in hell. The greatest sinners sometimes become the greatest penitents, witness David and so many others; and their penitence edifies more persons than the scandal they gave destroyed. God knows how to raise up from stones children to Abraham. The wonderful changes which His right hand effects causes vessels of ignominy to become vessels of honour.' He

never would hear of despair of sinners' conversion to their very last breath, saying, that this life is the road of our pilgrimage, in which those who stand may fall. and those who fall may by grace rise again. He went still further; for even when dead, he would not permit an evil judgment to be formed of such as had led an evil life, save in the case of those whose damnation is evident from Scripture. With this exception, he would have us not seek to enter into the secret of God, which He has reserved to His wisdom and power. His principal reason was this, that as the first grace was not within the reach of merit, so also the last grace, final perseverance, was not accorded to merit: *Who hath known the judgments of the Lord, and who hath been His counsellor?** Accordingly, even after the last breath had been drawn, he would have us hope the best of the deceased, however bad a death he might seem to have made, because we could but ground our conjectures on outward appearances, which may deceive the most acute. *Apropos* to this, he related to me the following anecdote: 'A preacher of an indulgent disposition, speaking of the heresiarch† who caused the revolt of the Church of Geneva, said, that we must not speak decisively of the damnation of any one after death, save of those whom Scripture has declared to be reprobate, not even of that heresiarch who was the author of so much evil by his errors. For who knows. he said, whether God may not have touched his heart at the moment of death, and whether he may not have been converted? It is true, he continued, that out of the Church, and without true faith, there is no salvation; but who knows if he did not in his heart acknowledge the truth of the faith he had opposed, and at the last die truly penitent? After having kept his audience thus in suspense, he concluded by saying, We ought, indeed, to have very high sentiments of the goodness of God. Jesus Christ offered His peace, His love and salvation,

* Rom. xi. 34.

† Calvia.

even to the traitor who betrayed Him with a kiss; why may He not have offered the same grace to this wretched heresiarch? Is God's arm shor ened? Is He become less kind and less merciful, He who is mercy itself, and mercy without number, measure, or limit? But, he added, believe me, and I can assure you I speak but the truth,—if he was not damned, he had as narrow an escape as ever man had; and if he was saved from that everlasting shipwreck, he owed as handsome a candle* to God as ever did any one of his sort.' This lively and quite unexpected conclusion did not draw many tears from the eyes of his auditors.

"Our Saint was in the habit of saying, that the soul of our neighbour is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which we are forbidden to touch under pain of chastisement, because God has reserved the judgment hereof to Himself. He observed an inconsistency very common amongst men, who are by nature inclined to judge in a matter where they are ignorant—namely, the interior of others, while they are averse to judging of what they do know, or ought to know—their own interior. The first is forbidden, the second is commanded. In this they resemble a certain woman, who, having made a point all her life of doing precisely the contrary to what her husband desired, was at last drowned in a river. Her husband being found fit with for looking for her body in the contrary direction to the current, 'Do you believe,' he replied, 'that death will have deprived her of her spirit of contradiction?' To avoid this vice, our Saint gave the following excellent rule: If an act may be viewed in a hundred different lights, to look at it always in its fairest. If we cannot excuse an action, we may soften it by excusing the intention; if that be not possible, we must lay it to the force of temptation, or ignorance, or surprise, or human weakness, so as at least to strive to diminish the scandal. In short, he said, those who

* An allusion to the votive offerings made by sailors escaped from peril.

keep a watch over their conscience seldom commit the fault of rash judgments. It is the act of an idle soul which has no occupation within itself, to stop to scrutinise other people's actions."

Here is a specimen of his skill in excusing his neighbours. "I was finding fault to him one day," says M. de Belley, "with some little country-gentlemen, who, although as poor as Job, played the great lords, talking continually of their nobility and the high deeds of their ancestors. He replied with wonderful grace, 'What would you have? Do you wish these poor people to be doubly poor? If they are rich in honour, at any rate they think less of their poverty; like that young Athenian who was under the mental delusion that he was the richest man in the country, and having been cured of his madness by the care of his friends, caused them to be prosecuted for having robbed him of his pleasing imagination. What would you have? It belongs to nobility to bear up with a high spirit against ill-fortune. Like the elastic palm, it rebounds under its burden. Would to God they may never have worse faults! It is of those miserable and detestable duels we should complain;' and he said this with a sigh.

"One day, as persons were exclaiming and even using vehement invectives against a very scandalous fault, although one of infirmity, committed by a member of a religious community, he said nothing, except, 'O human misery! human misery!' at another time, 'O how encompassed we are with infirmity!' and again, 'What can we do of ourselves but sin?' and, 'We should perhaps do worse, if God did not hold us by the right hand, and lead us according to His will.' He was in the habit of saying, that if the world were freed from evil-speaking, it would be freed from a very large portion of its sins, for of all sins which may be classed under the heads of thought, word, and deed, the most frequent and the most dangerous sometimes are those of word; and this for many reasons. First, because sins of thought are hurtful only to him who commits

them, and are the occasion of neither scandal, irritation, nor bad example to others, being known only to God whom they offend; and so a loving and penitent return to God effaces them: but those of the tongue reach further; the word once pronounced can be recalled only by a humble retraction; and yet our neighbour's heart has none the less been infected and poisoned through his ear. Secondly, sins of deed, if of any note, are liable to public chastisement; but slander, unless it be very atrocious and disgraceful, is not amenable to punishment; hence numbers of persons fall into this sin. The third reason is the rareness of restitution and reparation in this matter; those who have the conduct of souls being too indulgent, not to say remiss, in this respect.

"It pained him to hear any one call a person bad on account of some single reprehensible act, because virtuous habits, he said, are not extinguished by one contrary act; for instance, we cannot call a man a drunkard on account of one solitary act of intemperance, and so of the other vices. Hence, when he heard any one for a single sin taxed with the corresponding vice, he gently remonstrated against the accusation, and observed that there was a wide difference between vice and sin, the former signifying a habit, the latter an act; and that as one swallow does not make a summer, so one solitary sinful act does not render a person vicious, that is, habituated to the vice an act of which he has performed. But if so, it was objected, we may not, on the other hand, conclude that a person is in a state of grace, and possesses charity, however holy he may appear in his actions. He replied, that if faith, as St. James teaches, is known by works, much more is charity, which is a far more active virtue, works being, in relation to it, like sparks which reveal the existence of fire; and although, when we witness a sin confessedly mortal, we may affirm that the person committing it forfeited the grace of God, how can we tell whether God, a moment after, did not touch his heart? and whether

he did not turn from his evil way by an act of contrition? We must, therefore, be very fearful of judging ill of others; but as to judging well, we may act with perfect freedom; because charity believes and hopes all good of its neighbour, thinks no evil, and rejoices in truth and goodness, but not in iniquity."

But if St. Francis was an enemy to slander and rash judgments, so also was he to the uncharitable practice of personal ridicule.

"When in society," says M. de Belley, "he heard any one throwing ridicule on another, his countenance testified his dislike of the conversation; he would introduce another topic to create a diversion, and when he could not succeed by this method, he would rise and say, 'This is trampling too much on the good man, and passes all reasonable bounds. Who gives us the right to amuse ourselves in this way at the expense of others? Should we like to be treated thus, and have all our foibles dissected by the razor of the tongue? To bear with our neighbour and his imperfections is a great perfection, and it is a great imperfection to cut him up in this way by ridicule.' With reference to this practice, he said that it was one of the worst dispositions a mind could have; that God exceedingly hates this vice, and punishes it in remarkable ways. One day a young lady was amusing herself in his hearing with quizzing another's want of beauty, and was laughing at some natural blemishes with which she had been born; upon which he quietly observed, that it was God who had made us, and not we ourselves; and that His works are perfect. But the lady laughing still more at his saying that God's works were perfect, 'Believe me,' he said, 'her soul is more upright, more beautiful and well-proportioned; he satisfied that I know this for certain; and so he silenced her. On another occasion, some one laughing in his presence at the deformed appearance of an absent person, who had not only a hump on his back but one in front,—he immediately took his part, alleging the same Scriptures

saying, that God's works are perfect. 'How perfect,' rejoined the other, 'with so imperfect a shape?' The Saint sweetly answered, 'What! do you not believe that there are perfect humpbacks as well as persons perfectly straight?' Being requested to explain to what kind of perfection he alluded, interior or exterior, he replied, 'It is enough; what I have said is true; let us talk of something better.'

"There are no greater enemies to human society than those obstinate and self-opinionated people who are continually contradicting others; they are the pest of conversation, the scourge of social intercourse, and sowers of dissension. Mild, condescending, yielding, and tractable tempers, on the other hand, who readily give way, are living charms to attract and win every body. Our Saint commended much St. Louis's advice, never to contradict any one, unless sin or some considerable damage would be the result of abstaining. This holy king did not say this from human prudence, of which he was the enemy, nor according to the pagan emperor's maxim, that no one ought to leave the prince's presence discontented, but from a truly Christian spirit to shun disputes, according to the Apostle's counsel, who would have us carefully avoid all contention."

It was St. Francis's opinion, that few persons are extremely taciturn from a virtuous motive. Here, as in all else, his sweet and gentle spirit led him to adopt the true mean.

"One day, persons were talking before him of a certain individual who would pass for a great man by dint of silence. 'If so,' said our Saint, 'he has discovered the secret of acquiring a reputation at a cheap rate;' and then, after a pause, he added, 'No one resembles a wise man so much as a fool when he holds his tongue. Wisdom does not consist in not speaking, but in speaking as and when we ought, and in holding our peace in proper time and place.' Some persons, out of a conscientious but unenlightened zeal, the moment they desire to give themselves to the practice of devo-

tion, fancy they must shun all company and conversation, as owls avoid the day-birds, and by this strange and austere behaviour inspire others with an aversion to devotion, instead of rendering it pleasing and attractive. Our Saint did not approve of this, but wished those who practised devotion to be the light of the world by their good example, and the salt of the earth, to impart a taste for piety to such as lacked it. But, it may be said, if the salt returns to the ocean from whence it was drawn, it will melt and become dissolved. True, but also if you do not mix it with meats, they will have no savour.

"To a good soul who asked him if such as desire to live with some perfection may mix with the world, he made this reply: 'Perfection does not consist in not seeing the world, but in not having a taste or relish for it. All that sight brings is danger, for he who beholds it runs some risk of loving it; but to him who is fortified by a good and firm resolution, it does no harm. In a word, the perfection of charity is the perfection of life; for the life of our soul is charity. The primitive Christians lived in the world in body but not in heart, and were nevertheless very perfect.'

"Our Saint, by the help of grace, knew how to unite in his person two admirable qualities,—gravity and sweetness. He knew how to blend with the ray of majesty and honour, which grace had poured upon his brow, so much affability and sweetness, that you would have said it was another Moses who veiled his beaming face when he would converse familiarly with his brethren. If he possessed attractions which drew persons to love him, he had also so much gravity and modesty, that they could not help fearing, or at least respecting him. But this respect was so full of love, that I knew of many who quite trembled when they spoke to him; not so much from the fear of displeasing him (for nothing displeased him, and he received the rudest persons graciously), but for fear of not pleasing him enough. I will candidly own that I took so much

delight in doing any thing to please him, that when he evinced any satisfaction with me, my head was up in the stars; and if he had not taught me to refer all ultimately to God, without stopping short at himself, many of my actions would have come to a stand in the midst of their course. As for his sweetness, it was unknown only to those to whom he himself was not known. In him this virtue seemed to have clothed itself with a human form; and you would have said he was gentleness itself, rather than a man endowed with that quality. Hence he possessed such powerful influence over men's minds, that all gave way to him; and as he condescended to each individually, making himself all things to all men, so, on the other hand, all acquiesced in his desire, which was no other than to behold them all embarked in the service of God and the ways of salvation."

THE SAINT'S OPINIONS ABOUT PREACHING AND CONTROVERSY.
AND HIS METHOD IN DEALING WITH HERETICS.

Any notice of the spirit of St. Francis of Sales would be incomplete without a few extracts regarding these points, which are naturally connected with each other. His extraordinary success as a preacher makes every hint on this subject extremely valuable. Here, as in every thing else which appertains to him, we find the same spirit of sweetness, simplicity, and sincerity. A few anecdotes will illustrate these characteristics. We will head them by an amusing incident related by the candid Bishop, who, in his admiration for the model before him, fell into the mistake of labouring after an external copy of the Saint's manner in the pulpit.

"I entertained so high an esteem of him, that all his ways enchanted me. I took it into my head to imitate his style of preaching. Do not imagine, however, that I aspired to imitate him in the height of his thoughts, in the profundity of his doctrine, in the power

of his reasoning, in the soundness of his judgment, in the tenderness of his language, in the perfect order and connection which reigned in his sermons, and in that incomparable sweetness which could remove the very rocks from their foundations. All that was beyond my reach. I was like those flies which, unable to walk on the polished surface of a mirror, betake themselves to the frame. I amused myself, and, as you will hear, I deceived myself, in striving to adopt his external action, his gestures, and pronunciation. In him all this was slow and quiet; mine being naturally the reverse, I underwent so strange a metamorphosis, that no one would have known me; it was no longer I myself. I had spoilt my own original, to make a very bad copy of him whom I wished to imitate. Our Saint, who had been informed of all this proceeding, said to me one day, after making approaches to the subject for some time, '*Apropos* to sermons, I have heard a piece of news: I am told you have taken a fancy to mimic the Bishop of Geneva's preaching.' I defended myself from this charge by replying, 'Well, and have I chosen so bad a pattern after all? Do you not think he preaches better than I do?' 'Ah! come,' he rejoined, 'here is a personal attack. Well, certainly, he does not preach ill; but the worst is, that I am told that you imitate him so badly, that people can make nothing of it but a very imperfect attempt, which spoils the Bishop of Belley, without representing the Bishop of Geneva; so that it would be necessary to follow the example of that bad painter, who used to write the names of the persons whose portraits he had taken under the faces he had daubed.' 'Let him alone,' I retorted, 'and you will see that by degrees he will rise from the rank of apprentice to that of a master; and that in the end his copies will pass for originals.' 'Joking apart,' he replied, 'you spoil yourself, and pull down a good building, to reconstruct another against all the rules of nature and art; besides, at your age, supposing you have contracted a bad crease, like a piece of cloth, you will

not find it easy to get rid of it. O, if it were possible to exchange qualities, what would I not give for yours! I do what I can to move and stir myself up to a little rapidity; but the more I labour, the slower I get on. I have a difficulty in finding words; more still in pronouncing them. I am heavier than the old stump of a tree; I can move neither myself nor others; I perspire, it is true, a great deal, but make very little way. You get on full sail, I by dint of oars; you fly, I crawl or creep, along like a tortoise; you have more fire in your fingers' ends than I have in my whole body,—a wonderful rapidity, and the liveliness of a bird; and now I fear that you weigh your words, measure your periods, drag your wings; that you droop and flag, and make your hearers do the same.' I can tell you that this dose was so effectual, that it freed me from this pleasant error, and sent me back to my old ways."

His love of a holy simplicity and sincerity is displayed in several other charitable lessons which the good Bishop records as having received at his hands.

"One day I was to preach at the Visitation; and being aware that our Saint would be present, and that a large concourse was expected, I must own that I had felt a little personal anxiety on the occasion, and had prepared in good earnest. When we had retired to his house, and were alone together, 'Well,' he said, 'you have given general satisfaction to-day; people went away exclaiming *mirabilia* at your fine and eloquent panegyric. I only met with one individual who was not satisfied.' 'What can I have said,' I replied, 'to shock this person's mind? for I have no desire to know his name.' 'But I, for my part,' he rejoined, 'have a great desire to tell it you.' 'Who is he, then, that I may endeavour to give him satisfaction?' 'If I had not great confidence in you, I should not name him; but as I know you well, I willingly do so. Do you see him here?' I looked round, and saw no one but himself. 'It is you, then,' I said. 'Myself,' he replied. 'Certainly,' I rejoined; 'I should have valued your

single approbation more than that of the whole congregation. 'Thank God, I have fallen into the hands of one who wounds only that he may heal! What, then, did you find fault with? for I know that your indulgence will not excuse any thing in me.' 'I love you too much,' he resumed, 'to flatter you; and if you had loved our sisters after this fashion, you would not have amused yourself in puffing up their minds, instead of edifying them; in praising their state in life, instead of teaching them some humiliating and more salutary doctrine. It is with the food of the mind as with that of the body. Flattery is windy; and windy food, like vegetables, is innutritious. We ought in preaching to provide, not empty food, the memory of which perishes with its utterance, but meat which will endure to life everlasting. We must never, indeed, ascend the pulpit, without the special object of building up some corner or other of the walls of Jerusalem, by teaching the practice of some virtue, or the avoiding of some vice; for the whole fruit of preaching consists in the eradicating of sin, and the planting of justice. *O Lord, exclaimed David, I will teach the unjust Thy ways, and the wicked shall be converted unto Thee.*' 'What sort of conversion,' I retorted, 'could I preach to souls delivered from the hands of their enemies, the devil, the flesh, and the world, and serving God in holiness?' 'You ought to have taught them,' he said, 'to take heed, since they stand, not to fall; to work out their salvation, according to the counsel of the Holy Spirit, with fear and trembling; and not to be without fear, even with respect to forgiven sin. You described them to us as so many saints; it costs you nothing to canonise the living. You must not place pillows under elbows in this way, nor give milk to those who need bitter herbs and wormwood.' 'My object,' I said, 'was to encourage and fortify them in their holy undertaking.' 'We must encourage,' he replied, 'without run-

ning the risk of exciting presumption and vanity. It is always safer to humble our hearers, than to exalt them to high and admirable things above their reach. I feel persuaded that another time you will be cautious in this respect.'

"The next day he made me preach at a convent of the nuns of St. Clare. He was present, and the congregation was not less numerous than on the preceding day. I took care to avoid the pitfall he had pointed out to me: my discourse was very simple, both in words and ideas, aiming at nothing except edification. I proceeded with much method, and pressed home my subject. Our Saint, on our return, came to see me in my apartment, which, in fact, was his own; for when I was on a visit to him, he always gave me up his room. After tenderly embracing me, 'Truly,' he said, 'I loved you dearly yesterday, but much more to-day. You are, indeed, quite after my own heart; and if I am not much mistaken, you are also according to God's heart, who, I believe, has been pleased with your sacrifice. I could not have believed you would have been so yielding and condescending. It is a true saying, that *the obedient man shall speak of victory*.* You have conquered yourself to-day. Do you know that most of your hearers said, "To-day is very unlike yesterday," and they were not as much pleased this time as the last; but the individual who was not satisfied yesterday is wonderfully pleased to-day. I grant you hereupon a plenary indulgence for all your past faults. You have fulfilled all my wishes to-day; and if you persevere, you will do much service for the Lord of the vineyard. Preaching must not seek its strength in the words and the notions of human wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power. If you faithfully adhere to this method, God will give to your labours a full and honourable increase; you will become prudent in the words of mystical wisdom, and will pos-

* Prov. xxi. 28

possess the science of the saints, the science that makes saints. What, after all, do we desire to know, save Jesus, and Jesus crucified!

"When he heard people talk of preachers who did wonders, he would ask, 'How many has their preaching converted? for the conversion of souls is a more miraculous work than the resurrection of the dead, since it is a passage from the death of sin to the life of grace.' If it was replied, that the wonders alluded to were eloquence, science, memory, striking manner, and other characteristics of a great speaker,—'These qualities,' he would say, 'are those of a worldly orator, and can be acquired by human diligence; but they appertain not to those on whom the Holy Spirit, which has been conferred upon them, has poured the science of the language of heaven, which is the science of salvation and of the saints.'

"When any one said a preacher was succeeding very well, he would ask in what virtues he excelled, whether in humility, in mortification, in sweetness, in courage, in devotion, and such like. On being told that it was good preaching which was meant, 'That,' he would rejoin, 'is saying, not doing. The one is much easier than the other. How many there are who say, and do not—who pull down by their bad example, what they have built up with their tongue! Is not that man a very monster, whose tongue is longer than his arm?' Some one observed of a preacher, 'He has done wonders to-day.' He replied, 'He who has done wonders is the man who is found without spot—who has not followed after gold, nor placed his hope in worldly treasure.' To another, who said of a certain preacher that he had even soared above himself, 'What interior self-sacrifice has he achieved?' was his reply; 'what injury has he endured? It is upon such-like occasions that we surmount ourselves. Would you know whence I infer the excellence and merit of a preacher? It is when those who come away strike their breasts, saying, *I will do well; not, How well*

he has come! When the sermon is over, do not amuse yourself with attending to those vain popular plaudits, How well he has acquitted himself! What an eloquent tongue! What profound knowledge! What an admirable memory! What a fascinating preacher! What a pleasure it is to listen to such a man! I never had such a treat in all my life! All this is empty babble, proceeding from minds that lack judgment. Christian preachers, St. Jerome tells us, ought not to have recourse to the arts of the rhetorician, but should use the simple language of fishermen; that is, of the Apostles. If St. Paul condemns hearers with itching ears, how much more preachers who scratch them by their choice words, rounded periods, and studied compositions! But if, upon coming out from the sermon, you should meet with any who, like the centurion, say, Truly this man is of God; he preaches Jesus Christ crucified, not himself; he teaches us to repent of our sins; it will not be his fault if we do not turn from our evil ways; this sermon will rise against us at the day of judgment, if we do not profit by it: or if they say, O, how necessary is penance for salvation! how lovely is virtue! how sweet is the burden of the cross! how light the yoke of God's law! how hideous and detestable a thing is sin! rather let us die than sin: or if, without using so many words, the hearers testify to the fruit of the preaching by amendment of life, you may then judge of the goodness and efficiency of the preacher, not to his glory, but to the glory of Him that sent him,—to the glory of God, who speaks by his mouth, and fills him with His Spirit.'

"In proof of this, he told me the following anecdote: 'A very celebrated preacher came to Annecy; I begged him to preach; he consented; and setting off in a high style, he propounded his sublime notions in such pompous language, and with such a display of eloquence, that our good mountaineers were quite astonished. As they came out, nothing was to be heard but expressions of delight and admiration. Never was

so much incense of praise offered to mortal man : they vied with each other in their applause, and in crying him up to the skies. Knowing well how much this discourse was above the comprehension of its admirers, I took some of them aside, and questioned them, to discover how much they had retained of it, and what particular profit they had derived from it. Not one of them could tell me a word. One more ingenuous than the rest replied : "If I had understood it, and could retail it to you, that would show that he had said nothing uncommon. It is our ignorance which excites our admiration ; for he talked of such high and lofty things, that they were quite beyond our reach ; and this makes us have a greater esteem for the mysteries of our religion." Our Saint praised his candour, and acknowledged that he had derived some sort of profit from the sermon. Spring flowers are not enough, if they are not followed by autumn fruit. The preacher who has only the leaves of language and fine thoughts, is in peril of being classed among those unfruitful trees who are threatened in the Gospel with the axe and the fire. *I have chosen you, said our Lord to His Apostles, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and your fruit should remain.**"

M. de Belley mentions, that in the early days of his episcopate, being yet, as he says, "very green" (having by the special dispensation of the Pope been consecrated under the age prescribed by the canons), and having his mind yet freshly stored with his school knowledge and with elegant literature, for which he had a particular turn, he brought forth a redundancy of such matter from the treasures of his memory. It was upon the occasion of his being invited, in 1610, to preach the Lent before the Senate of Savoy, in Chambery, the capital city of that province, that it was reported to our Saint, who was at his episcopal residence at Annecy, only seven leagues distant, that (to continue in the Bishop's own words) his "discour-

* John xv. 16.

ses were all flowers and perfume, which attracted crowds of hearers, like bees which cluster round sugar and honey. He, however, who judged after quite a different fashion, and who was well skilled in this art, would have desired to see me draw more upon the divine Scriptures than on human letters; he would have wished for more of the solid spirit of piety than display of spiritual expressions eloquent with human wisdom. Whereupon he wrote me a beautiful letter, in which he apprised me, that the odour which my sweet spices exhaled had reached even to him, so that he compared himself to Alexander, who, sailing towards the Fortunate Islands, was made aware of their neighbourhood by the fragrance which the wind, sweeping over the smooth surface of the sea, wafted to his vessels. After having thus concealed the point of his lancet in this oiled and perfumed cotton, he stuck it in by telling me that, after so many messengers, who every day brought him word that our bed was all strewn with verdure, our furniture of cedar and cyprus,—that our blossoming vines were spreading their sweetness on all sides,—that our garden was full of nothing but flowers,—that it was laughing spring-time all around us,—he was expecting others to give him news of summer and autumn, of the harvest and the vintage. ‘I am listening,’ he said, ‘to hear *an flores fructus parturiant* ;’* telling me that, after all, he advised me to strip my vine of its superfluous tendrils of *belles-lettres*—*temprus putationis venit* ;† to prune and retrench from it so many foreign ornaments; and that, although it was allowable to use the vases of the Egyptians for the service of the tabernacle, † ought to be with sober moderation; that Rachel was indeed fairer than Lia, but that Lia was more fruitful; that the Gospel ought to be expounded in conformity with its own style and simplicity; that red and white paint ill became the face of theology; and that we ought to beware of adulterating the Word of God much more than the

* Whether the flowers are bringing forth fruits.

† “The time of pruning is come.” Canticles ii. 12.

current coin; to which he added many other similar instructions, which had the effect of making me much more reserved, much less liberal of those viands which are rather empty than solid, and much more careful to labour for that meat which perishes not, and which the Gospel so strongly recommends to us.

"It was his opinion, that it was not sufficient that the preacher should have a general intention of instructing in the ways of God, but that he should aim at some special object; for instance, the knowledge of some mystery, the exposition of some article of faith, the destruction of some vice, or the establishment of some virtue. 'You would hardly believe,' he said, 'how important is this advice, and how many laboured and studied sermons are profitless for want of point. If you will follow this maxim, your sermons will produce much fruit; if you neglect it, you may reap admiration for yourself, but others will derive no benefit.'"

"He approved extremely of shortness in sermons, and said that lengthiness was the most general defect of the preachers of his day. 'Do you call that a defect,' said I, 'and thus give to plenty the name of scarcity?' 'When the vine,' he replied, 'produces a great deal of wood, then it is that it bears the least fruit. A multitude of words never produces a great effect. Observe all the homilies and sermons of the ancient fathers—how short they are; but O how much more efficacious they were than ours! The good St. Francis, in his rule, enjoins upon the preachers of his Order to be brief, and adduces this reason—that God had *made a short word upon the earth*.* Believe me,' he said, 'I speak from experience, and from very long experience; the more you say, the less will be remembered; the more you say, the less will your hearers profit. By dint of overloading their memory, you make it break down; as lamps are put out by too

* Rom. ix. 22.

much oil, and plants are stifled by too much watering. When a sermon is too long, the end makes us forget the middle, and the middle the beginning. Preachers of very moderate powers are endurable, provided they are brief; while such as are excellent become burdensome when they are too long. A preacher cannot have a more offensive fault than lengthiness. You must say little, and that good, and inculcate it diligently, not making the least account of those fastidious minds who are displeased when a preacher repeats a thing, and goes over the same ground again. What! is it not necessary in making a work of iron to heat it over and over again; and in painting to touch and retouch repeatedly? How much more, then, is it needful, in order to imprint eternal truths in hearts confirmed in evil, and on hardened intellects?"

Not only did St. Francis approve of short sermons, but he had a predilection for a limited audience, as M. de Belley thus relates:

"'Rejoice,' said our Saint, 'when in ascending the pulpit you see few people, and that you have but a thinly-scattered audience.' 'But,' said I, 'it costs no more trouble to teach many than few.' 'It is from a thirty years' experience in this matter,' he replied, 'that I speak; and I have always seen greater results for God's service from sermons I have preached before small than before large congregations. At the time I was provost, I was sent by the bishop, my predecessor, to preach. One Sunday, when the weather was very bad, there were only seven persons in the church, so that some one observed to me, that it was not worth while to give any sermon. I replied, that neither did a large audience encourage, nor a small one dishearten me; that provided one single individual was edified, it was enough. I accordingly mounted the pulpit, and I remember my sermon was on prayer to the saints. I treated the subject very simply; I said nothing either pathetic or vehement; however, one of the congregation began to weep bitterly, and even to sob and sigh

quite audibly. I thought he was ill, so I begged him not to put any constraint upon himself; that I was about to finish, and would come and help him if he needed any thing. He replied that he was quite well in body, and begged me to go on, saying that I was dressing the wound which required it. When the sermon, which was short, was over, he came and threw himself at my feet, exclaiming, 'M. le Provost, I owe my life to you; you have saved my soul to-day. Blessed be the hour when I came here and heard you! it has been worth an eternity to me.' He then told me, that having been conferring with some (Protestant) ministers concerning prayer to the saints, which they represented as horrible idolatry, he had fixed the following Thursday for his abjuration of the Catholic religion; but that he had been so well instructed by the sermon he had just heard, and his doubts had been so completely removed, that he detested the promise he had made, and vowed obedience anew to the Roman Church. I cannot tell you what an impression this example, occurring amongst so small a number of people, produced through the whole neighbourhood, and how docile and ready to receive the Word of God it rendered the hearts of others.'

"A very learned preacher, who took great pains with his sermons, but who was not much followed, often employed the best part of his discourse in complaining of the negligence of those who did not come to hear the Word of God, and even went so far as to threaten to throw all up and forsake his pulpit. The Saint, who had been present, said to one of his confidential friends, as they came out of church, 'Whom is this good person angry with? He has scolded us for a fault we have not committed, for we were present. Would he have had us cut ourselves up into bits to fill the empty places? It is the absent he was displeased with, and they will not be the more punctual in consequence, for they did not hear him. If he wished to address them, he ought to have gone about the streets

and public places, to compel those who frequented them to come to his banquet. As it is, he inveighed at the innocent, and let the guilty alone.'

"Disputes on religious matters were very disagreeable to him, particularly at table and after dinner; these were not, he said, bottle topics. I replied, one day, taking up his expression, that if a bottle of this kind was occasionally broken, it was to give forth the lamp of truth, which is all fire and flame. 'Yes, indeed,' he rejoined, 'fire and flames of anger and altercation, which yield only smoke and blackness, and very little light.' He also particularly disapproved of controversial subjects being introduced into sermons, preaching being ordained rather to edify than to pull down; and for instruction in morals, rather than for settling those disputes concerning the faith which arise among such as are external to the Church. But it will be urged, perhaps, that it is for the purpose of confirming Catholics in their belief that the arguments of their adversaries are overthrown in their presence. A plausible reason, but of which experience proves the futility; because, not to speak of the thorny difficulties with which these distressing contestations are beset, the human mind, owing to its natural corruption, has so great a propensity to evil, that it will fix its attention on the objection rather than on its solution, and choose the serpent in place of the bread. His method, both in preaching and in private conferences with Protestants, was to expound with that clearness and facility for which he was so remarkable the simple and naked truths of faith; for truth, he said, in its native simplicity, had charms and attractions capable of winning the most rebellious souls. This plan he found to succeed so admirably, that, provided he could get a Protestant to give him a calm and quiet hearing, not only did he make his weapons fall from his hands by thus disposing of his objections before he had made them, but if he did not gain him over at once, he made so deep an impression that the person was sure to return very soon

to seek a healing remedy from the hand which had inflicted so happy a wound."

The example of this great Saint is the more apposite, that it will be remembered he was called to rule a flock surrounded and intermingled with heretics. His advice, therefore, on this head may be received absolutely, and does not require modification from any material difference in the circumstances in which we ourselves are placed. Now this great Saint considered that this method had four notable advantages: 1, it hides the point of the lancet in cotton; 2, it avoids the weariness and importunity which generally accompany the thorny path of controversy; 3, it takes its hearers happily by surprise, and makes them receive the truth, not only without difficulty, but with pleasure; 4, simple as it is, it possesses in its simplicity a wonderful energy, changing offensive into defensive weapons, and drawing proofs for the defence of truth from the very objections of those who are in error.

M. de Belley goes on to exemplify the manner in which the Saint practised this method:

"The answers which Catholics are in the habit of giving to the objections which Protestants make from passages of Scripture, being conformable to the truths which are taught by the Church, we have only to bring forward the solution first, which being explained and reasoned out, without making it figure as an answer to an objection, the passage upon which the difficulty is grounded comes by this means to furnish a proof of the truth laid down. Thus it was that the Saint himself explained it to me. Here is an example which will make the matter clear:

"Protestants commonly quote this passage of Scripture against the Real Presence: '*It is the spirit which giveth life: the flesh profiteth nothing*;' to which we make two replies,—the one from St. Chrysostom, the other from St. Augustine: first, that the flesh without the spirit—that is, without the Divinity—would profit nothing; secondly, that the carnal and gross way is

which the Capharnaïtes understood Him profited nothing. In pursuance of the object we have in view, we have only to point out the weakness of the flesh by itself, without being united to the Divinity and anointed by it, and to show that it is the Divinity which imparts to the humanity the power it possesses of communicating to the faithful who are its members that grace which itself has received as the head; and thus it is this spirit of the Divinity and this Sacred Flesh which vivifies souls who become partakers thereof in communion. According to the second interpretation, we have only to represent how gross and unworthy of the majesty of this mystery was the notion of the Capharnaïtes, and how far removed from it is the Catholic faith on this point, and hence conclude how true are these words of the Saviour, that the flesh, taken in these two senses, would profit nothing; by this means availing ourselves, in confirmation of the orthodox doctrine, of that which is employed to oppose it. He told me that he had for a long time employed this method, and that it threw so complete a disguise over controversy, that, although one might preach nothing else, hearers would scarcely be aware of the fact unless it were pointed out to them. He preached an Advent and Lent at Grenoble, where there are numbers of Protestants, who were more diligent in their attendance on his preaching than on that of their own ministers, because, they said, he was free from the spirit of contention; and yet he always employed the first part of his discourse in setting forth the truths of Catholic doctrine, but in the manner I have described, the latter part being devoted to moral and devotional application: the Protestants meanwhile, who never perceived the art of his method, wondering much at seeing him establish the faith of the Roman Church by the very same Scripture texts by which they supported their principal objections.

"Our Saint one day, while at Paris, preached a sermon on the last judgment, to which God gave so much power and efficacy, that certain Protestants who

had come to hear him from curiosity were so deeply moved, that they conceived a desire to confer with him on some points of faith; the result being their complete satisfaction, and the conversion of an entire family of much note, who were received into the bosom of the Catholic Church.

"Here is the Saint's own account of the fact: 'Being at Paris, and preaching in the queen's chapel upon the subject of the day of judgment (it was not a controversial sermon), it happened that Madame de Perdreauville was present, having come from curiosity. She was caught in the snare, and in consequence of that sermon came to the resolution of seeking instruction; three weeks afterwards she brought her whole family to me to confession, and stood godmother to them all at confirmation. See how this sermon, which was not aimed at heresy, was endued with such power against it; for God at that time vouchsafed me that grace to my words in favour of these souls.

"I have always said ever since that who ever preaches with love, preaches sufficiently against heresy, although he may not utter a single word of controversy against it. For these thirty-three years that God has called me to the sacred office of breaking the bread of His Word to the people, I have certainly remarked that practical sermons, where the subject is treated with devotion and with zeal, are so many burning coals thrown in the faces of the Protestants who hear them; that they are always pleased and edified by them, and are thereby rendered more docile and reasonable when we come to confer with them on disputed points. This is not my opinion alone, but that of the most celebrated preachers whom I have known; and every one agrees that the pulpit ought not to be made the battle-ground of controversy, and that we demolish more than we build up, if we attempt any thing beyond a passing allusion to it."

If a Saint's opinion on this point is worthy of notice, how much more of one who gathered into the Church's bosom so many of her lost sheep!

"Our Saint," says M. de Belley, "had received from heaven a special grace for converting sinners within the Church, and for bringing back those without to the bosom of that Mother, separated from whom we cannot have God for our Father. As respects these, not to speak of the restoration of the Chablais to the true Church, in which he coöperated in the conversion of from forty to fifty thousand souls, he was besides personally instrumental in reclaiming some fifteen or sixteen thousand persons from Protestantism. This special gift for converting was the occasion of an observation which the great Cardinal du Perron, of literary celebrity, made one day,—that if it was a question merely of *confounding* heretics, he thought he possessed the secret; but to *convert* them, they must be sent to the Bishop of Geneva, who had a commission from heaven for that work. The Cardinal de Berulle was of the same opinion, and openly declared that the hand of God was with the blessed Francis."

We are not to suppose, however, that he shrank from controversy where the honour of religion and the good of souls required that the truth should be publicly vindicated. Here is an instance recorded by M. de Belley, which exemplifies his holy boldness, and at the same time manifests its source,—a perfect confidence in God, whose glory he sought alone, and a spirit of humble self-renunciation:

"The Saint, when preaching Lent and Advent at Grenoble, drew such crowded congregations, not only of Catholics, but of Protestants belonging to the Genevan sect, that the sermons of their own ministers were left unattended. One of these men, a turbulent spirit, seeing his pulpit deserted, after indulging in many invectives and injurious declamations against the Saint, defied him to a public conference. The challenge was accepted. A person of merit, who did not think it advisable that the Saint should expose himself to this contest, represented to him the insolent temper of this minister, who had a hellish mouth, and the most vitupe-

rative and abusive of tongues. 'Good,' said the Saint; 'this is just what we want.' And as his friend went on to represent to him that he would receive the most unworthy treatment from this man, who would show him no more consideration than if he was the lowest of the people, 'Better still,' replied the holy Bishop; 'this is what I seek. What glory shall accrue to God from my confusion!' 'But,' rejoined the other, 'would you expose the rank you hold to ignominy?' 'Our Lord,' answered the Saint, 'suffered far greater insults. Was He not satiated with opprobrium?' 'O,' replied his friend, 'you are aiming too high.' 'What shall I say?' continued the Saint. 'I hope that God will give me the grace to endure more insults than this man can offer me; and if we are deeply humbled, God will be gloriously exalted. You will see heaps of conversions after that,—a thousand falling on the left hand and ten thousand on the right. It is God's way to draw His own honour from our humiliation. Did not the Apostles come forth joyfully from those assemblies where they had endured affronts for the name of Jesus? Let us take courage, and God will help us. Such as hope in Him want for nothing, and are never confounded.'

"The enemy, however, who feared that this might prove a losing game, suggested so many prudential considerations to the minister's adherents, who mistrusted his powers, that they got the king's lieutenant, who at that time still belonged to their sect, to prevent the conference from taking place."

THE SAINT'S LOVE OF HUMILITY AND SIMPLICITY.

"St. Gregory has well said, that when we praise a wise man in his presence, we afflict his ears and pain his heart. Such was our Saint. He who so lovingly embraced those who spoke abusive words against him was more disposed himself to give abusive words to those who offered him the slightest praise. One day, preach-

ing before him at Annecy, and calling to mind a saying of the Bishop of Saluces, *Tu sal es, ego vero neque sal neque lux*,* I was betrayed into making a little allusion to his name, observing that he was the salt (*sales*) which seasoned the whole mass of the people. He was so extremely disedified by this praise, that when we had returned home he reproved me in a tone and with a manner that would have been severe, had he been capable of severity. 'You were going on so steadily,' he said, 'and running so well; what possessed you to be guilty of that sally? Do you know you spoil it all, and that one word was sufficient to make you lose the credit of your whole sermon? Is it not to mix with alloy the pure gold of the word of God to introduce the word of men? What is the praise of the living but the word of men? Is it not written, *Praise not any man before death*?† I am a fine salt indeed,—an insipid and savourless salt, fit only to be cast into the streets and trodden under foot. I grieve for so much good seed choked with a handful of cockle. Certainly if you said that to put me to shame, you have found out the true way.'

"It was impossible that he could be ignorant of the high esteem which not only his flock but the whole world entertained of his piety. It was to him the occasion of often humbling himself before God, and of frequently blushing before men, when he either saw or heard that he was accounted a holy man, and a faithful servant of God. 'Do you see,' he said; 'these good people, with all their praises and high esteem, will be the cause of my gathering very bitter fruit from their friendship. They will make me languish in purgatory for lack of prayers offered to God for my poor soul after my death, fancying that it has gone straight to heaven. This is all the good I shall get of this reputation.'

"It was not his habit to use expressions of humility in speaking of himself; he avoided such language, as

* Thou art salt; I, indeed, am neither salt nor light.

† Eccles. xi. 39.

one of the gulfs in which that virtue is apt to suffer shipwreck. He so strictly adhered to this practice, that nothing but stringent necessity ever led him to say good or evil of himself, even in the most indifferent matters. He sometimes said that it was as difficult a feat to speak of one's self as to walk along a tight-rope; and that a strong balance as well as wonderful circumspection was requisite to avoid a fall. He did not like to hear people talking very humbly of themselves, unless their words proceeded from a thoroughly sincere inward feeling. He said that such words were the quintessence, the cream, the elixir, of the most subtle pride. The truly humble man did not desire to appear humble, but to be humble. Humility is so fragile that she fears her own shadow, and cannot hear her own name mentioned without running the risk of perishing. He who blames himself is indirectly aiming at praise, and is like the rower who turns his back on the quarter which all his strength is employed to reach. He would be very sorry if we were to believe all the evil he says of himself; and it is his pride which makes him desire to be reckoned humble. He would often take those who used humble expressions in his hearing at their word, and even add to them, in order to inflict a salutary mortification upon the speaker, and give him a hint not to expose himself to the like again; being well persuaded that the great majority of those who say these things would be very sorry to be believed such as they describe themselves.

“He distinguished two kinds of humility,—external and internal. If the former is not produced, or at least accompanied, by the latter, it is very dangerous, for it is nothing more than a bark, an outside coating, a deceitful and hypocritical appearance; whereas, if it springs from inward humility, it is very good, and serves to edify our neighbour. He also subdivided inward humility into that of the understanding, and that of the will. The first is common enough; for who is there who knows not that he is nothing? Hence so much fine talk of the nothingness of self and of creatures. The second

is very rare, because few persons love humiliation. This latter sort has different degrees; the first is to love it, the second to desire it, the third to practise it, whether by seeking occasions for humbling ourselves, or by receiving willingly those which happen to us. Our Saint set a much higher value on the last, because there is much more abjection in suffering, loving, embracing, and receiving with joy, the humiliations which come to us unsought, than those which are of our own choosing. For in things of our own choice we are much more exposed to the assaults of self-love, unless our intention is very single and pure; and also, because where there is less of our own, there is more of the will of God. 'The crosses we carve for ourselves,' he said, 'are always more delicate than the others;' and he set more value on an ounce of suffering than on several pounds of action, good as it might be, which proceeded from our own will. He desired that humility, whether of the understanding or of the will, should be animated by charity; for otherwise, he said, we were but practising pagan virtue. He also desired that it should be accompanied by obedience, quoting that saying of St. Paul, that our Lord had *humbled Himself, becoming obedient.** 'See,' he observed, 'the true measure of humility, obedience. If you obey promptly, frankly, without murmuring, joyfully, without hesitation, and without reply, you are truly humble; and without humility it is difficult to be truly obedient; for obedience implies submission, and the truly humble looks upon himself as inferior and subject to every creature for the love of Jesus Christ.' He recommended us to steep all our actions in the spirit of humility, and to hide our good works as much as possible from the eyes of men, desiring that they should be seen by God alone. Nevertheless, he would not have us put such a constraint upon ourselves as to do no good action in the sight of men. He loved a noble, generous, and courageous humility, not such as is shrinking and cowardly. He

* Philip. ii. 8

would not have us say any thing for so empty an object as praise; but neither would he have us abstain from doing good for fear of obtaining esteem and admiration."

The following anecdote will illustrate his spirit of humility, and his aversion to any thing that could bear the semblance of ostentation in piety; and at the same time will serve to show in how much higher esteem he held the virtue of charitable condescension than the practice of corporal mortification:

"A prelate," relates M. de Belley, "coming to visit our Saint, he received him, as was his wont, very graciously, and detained him as his guest a few days. One Friday evening he sought him in his apartment, to ask him to come down to supper, which was ready. 'Supper!' exclaimed the prelate; 'this is no time for supper: surely the least one can do is to fast once a week.' The Saint did not press the matter, but, retiring, gave orders for his guest's collation to be served him in his own room, while he himself went down to the common room to sup with the prelate's chaplains and the other persons of his household. The chaplains told him that the prelate was so exact and strict in his religious exercises, whether of prayer, fasting, or such-like, that, no matter what company he had with him, he would omit nothing; not but that he would sit at table with them on the days when he was in the habit of fasting, but he would eat nothing beyond fasting-fare. One day, when we were conversing together about liberty of spirit, he related this incident to me, and told me that condescension was the daughter of charity, even as fasting is the sister of obedience; that if obedience was better than sacrifice, we ought to make no scruple of preferring condescension and hospitality to fasting. 'Do you see,' he added, 'we must not be so strongly attached even to the most pious exercises as to be unwilling upon occasions to lay them aside; otherwise, under the pretext of firmness of mind and fidelity, a refined species of self-love will introduce itself, which will lead us to substitute the means for the end; for in-

stead of making God our object, we fix our affections on the means which lead to God. And as far as concerns the fact of which we are speaking, a Friday's fast thus interrupted would have served to conceal something better; for there is no less merit in hiding such virtues than in the virtues themselves. God is a hidden God, who loves to be served, sought, and adored in secret, as we learn from the Gospel. You know what happened to that imprudent king of Israel for having displayed his treasures to the ambassadors of a barbarian monarch, who came with a powerful army and carried them all away. *Crede mihi, bene qui latuit, bene vixit.** Any one who had seen him eat his supper on Friday would never have guessed that it was his custom to observe that day as a fast; while he himself could very well have put it off to the next day, or the following week, or even omitted the fast altogether, to practise in its place the virtue of condescension. I make an exception in the case of the existence of a vow, for then we must be faithful unto death, and not trouble our heads what men will say, provided God be served."

To the love of humility St. Francis joined an equal esteem of the virtue of simplicity. "I know not," he said, 'what this poor virtue of prudence has done to displease me, but I have to make an effort to love it, and if I do love it, it is of pure necessity, seeing that it is the salt and torch of life. But the beauty of simplicity charms me, and I would at any time give a hundred serpents for one dove.' He laboured not only to banish from religious houses the pest of singularity, but also to lead those persons who make a profession of devotion in the world to avoid it; saying that this defect rendered their piety not only offensive but ridiculous. He wished people to conform externally, as much as possible, to the mode of life of those who followed the same profession, without affecting to make themselves remarkable by any singularity; proposing the example of our Saviour, who in the days of H-

* Believe me he who hides well lives well.

mortal life was pleased to make Himself in all things like to His brethren, sin only excepted. The Saint was most careful to practise this lesson in his own person; and during fourteen years that I was under his guidance, and studiously observed his behaviour, and even his most trifling gestures as well as his words, I never perceived any thing in him the least approaching to singularity. He has often told me that our outward demeanour ought to resemble water, which, the better it is, the clearer, the purer from admixture, and the more devoid of taste it is. Nevertheless, although there was nothing of singularity in him, he appeared to me so singular in this very thing of having no singularity in him, that every thing in him was in my eyes singular. I have always remembered what an eminent and pious individual said to me one day at Paris, that nothing reminded him so strongly of the conversation of our Lord among men as the presence of the angelic countenance of this blessed prelate, of whom it might be said that he was not only clothed but altogether filled with Jesus Christ."

The following little incident may be taken as an example of his great love of this virtue. "Our Saint, after preaching Advent and Lent at Grenoble, conceived a desire to visit the Grande Chartreuse, distant only three leagues. Dom Bruno d'Affringues, a native of St. Omer in Flanders, a person of profound learning and humility, and of still more profound simplicity, was at that time prior and general of the whole order. He received our Saint with a welcome becoming his piety, candour, and sincerity, of which you are going to hear an instance which our Saint praised up to the skies. After having conducted him to one of the rooms allotted to guests, and suitable to his rank, and after conversing with him on heavenly matters, he took his leave to go and prepare himself for matins. The Saint approved his punctuality highly; the good prior moreover adding in excuse that it was the feast of a Saint much honoured in his order. Leave having been taken with all due

compliments of honour and respect, as the prior was retiring to his cell. he was met by one of the procurators of the house, who asked him whither he was going, and where he had left Monseigneur of Geneva. 'I left him in his room,' replied the prior, 'and have taken leave of him, that I may go and prepare myself in my cell for matins, on account of to-morrow's feast.' 'Really, reverend father,' rejoined the religious, 'you are very ignorant of worldly proprieties. What! it is question merely of a feast of our order, and have we then every day the opportunity of receiving prelates of such exalted merit in our desert? Do you not know that God takes pleasure in the sacrifices of hospitality? You will always have plenty of time to sing the praises of God and matins in abundance; but who can entertain so great a prelate as well as yourself? What a disgrace to the house that you should leave him by himself in this way!' 'My child,' replied the reverend father, 'I believe you are right, and that I have done wrong.' And he immediately went back to the Bishop of Geneva, and said to him with the most perfect ingenuousness, 'Monseigneur, as I was going away, I met one of our officers, who pointed out to me that I had committed a fault in leaving you alone; that I should have other opportunities of attending matins, but that it is not every day that we have Monseigneur of Geneva. I thought he was right, and so I came back at once to entreat your pardon, and to beg you to excuse my fault, for I am telling you the truth when I say that I committed it through inadvertence.' The Saint was quite charmed with this singular instance of frankness, candour, ingenuousness, and simplicity; and assured me he was more delighted with it than if he had witnessed a miracle."

The extreme simplicity which in St. Francis himself was united to the profoundest humility is further exhibited by M. de Belley. "I have known," he says, "great servants of God whom nothing could have induced to allow any one to take their portrait, believing

that such an act would imply some sort of vanity or dangerous complaisance. Our Saint, who made himself all things to all men, made no difficulty about the matter. His reason was this, that as the law of charity obliges us to communicate to our neighbour the picture of our mind, imparting to him frankly and without grudging all we have learnt with respect to the science of salvation, we ought not to make any greater objection to give our friends the satisfaction they desire of having before their eyes, through the medium of painting, the representation of our outward man. If we see, not only without annoyance, but even with pleasure, our books, which are the portraits of our minds, in the hands of our neighbours, why grudge them the features of our face, if the possession of them will contribute any thing to their pleasure? These are his own words, writing on the subject to a friend: 'Here, at any rate, is the portrait of this earthly man, so little am I able to refuse you any thing you desire. I am told that it is the best likeness that was ever taken of me, but I think that matters very little: *In imagine pertransit homo, sed et frustra conturbatur.*'* I had to borrow it in order to give it you, for I have none of my own. Would that the likeness of my Creator did but shine forth in my mind!—with what pleasure would you behold it! *O Jesu, tuo lumine, tuo redemptos sanguine, sana, refove, perfice, tibi conformes effice. Amen.*†

"Whereupon take notice of his ingenuity in drawing profit from, and referring to God's glory, every thing that occurred; taking occasion of this portrait to teach so beautiful a lesson of humility and modesty, both to the person to whom he was sending it and to himself, after having first given the former a proof of his ready condescension. A man of a constrained and

* "Man passeth as an image; yea, and is disquieted in vain." Psalm xxxviii. 7.

† O Jesus, by Thy light, heal, renew, make perfect those who have been redeemed by Thy blood, and make them conformable to Thee. Amen.

timid spirit would have stiffened himself, and would have rather chosen some great mortification than have allowed his likeness to be taken. And why? To preserve humility, or for fear of offending against it; and here is a Saint who finds an opportunity in the very same thing for the exercise of humility, and that with so good a grace that it is hard to say which is the most praiseworthy in this action, the generosity displayed in his humility, or the humility evinced in his generosity."

The following little anecdote is also to the point. "In the year 1619 he accompanied his Eminence the Cardinal of Savoy to Paris, who went thither to be present at the marriage of the Prince of Piedmont, his brother, with Madame the King's sister, Christine of France. A man of the new religion asked to speak with him one day, and was shown into his room. This individual walking in, asked him at once, without the preface of salutation or compliment, 'Are you the person they call the Bishop of Geneva?'

" 'Sir,' replied our prelate, 'I am so styled.'

" 'I want you to tell me, since you are reckoned every where to be an apostolic man, if the Apostles drove about in carriages.'

" Our Saint was a little taken by surprise at this attack; but collecting himself, he remembered what is related of St. Philip in the Acts of the Apostles, who mounted the chariot or carriage of the eunuch of Candace, queen of Ethiopia, which suggested to him the reply, that they made use of carriages when it suited their convenience, and as opportunity presented itself.

" The other shook his head, and said, 'I should like you to give me Scripture proof of that;' upon which he referred to the example just mentioned. 'But that carriage,' replied the other, 'did not belong to him, but to the eunuch who invited him into it.'

" 'I did not say that the carriage belonged to him; but only that when the opportunity presented itself, they drove in carriages.'

" 'What is gilded embroidered carriages, so gorge-

ous, and drawn by such splendid horses, and driven by coachmen in such handsome liveries, that the king himself would not turn out a grander equipage?—this we do not read, and this is what scandalises me in you who play the saint and are reputed such. Certainly these are fine saints who journey to Paradise quite at their ease.'

" 'Alas! sir,' replied our Saint, 'they of Geneva who keep possession of the property of my bishopric have cut the grass so close, that it is all I can do to live in a small and poor way upon the remainder. I never had a carriage of my own, or the means of keeping one.'

" 'Then that grand and magnificent equipage in which I constantly see you is not your own?'

" 'No,' replied the Bishop, 'and you may well call it grand, for it belongs to his majesty, and is one of those which the king has allotted for the persons who, like myself, are in the suite of the princes of Savoy; you may know them by the king's livery which the coachman wears.'

" 'Well, I am very glad of it, and I like you the better. You are poor, then, it seems?'

" 'I do not complain of my poverty, since I have enough for a decent maintenance without superfluity; and even if I suffered something from straitened circumstances, I should do wrong to complain of what Jesus Christ chose for His life-long portion, living and dying in the arms of poverty. However, the family to which I belong owing allegiance to the house of Savoy, I have esteemed it an honour to accompany the Cardinal of Savoy on this journey, and to be present at the celebration of the alliance which his brother, the Prince of Piedmont, contracts with France by his marriage with Madame the King's sister.'

"The Protestant was so well satisfied with this explanation, that he declared to him he would henceforth hold him in esteem, and took his leave highly pleased.

"It was the Saint's opinion that we should take

care of our reputation, more for God's service than for our own honour, and rather to avoid scandal than to augment our own credit. He compared reputation to tobacco, which may be of service when used in moderation, and but seldom; but which injures and offuscates the brain when indulged in too often, and without moderation. 'What,' he exclaimed one day, 'is reputation, that so many should sacrifice themselves to this idol? After all, it is but a dream, a shadow, an opinion, a smoke, a praise, the memory whereof perishes with the sound—an esteem sometimes so false, that many take pleasure in hearing themselves lauded for virtues, of which they all the while know they have the opposite vices; and blamed for faults with which they are not chargeable. Those who complain of calumny are very sensitive. It is a little cross of words, which the wind disperses. I do not like to hear a person say, 'That expression wounded me,' in allusion to something offensive which has been said to him; for there is a great deal of difference between the humming of a bee and its sting. We must have a very delicate ear, and a very thin skin, if the one cannot endure the buzzing of a fly, and if the other is pricked by the mere sound of it. Was ever a reputation so torn to pieces as that of Jesus Christ? What insult but was heaped upon Him? What calumny with which He was not assailed? And yet the Father has given Him a Name which is above every name, and has exalted Him in proportion to His abasement. And did not the Apostles go forth joyfully from those assemblies where they had received affronts for the name of Jesus? Oh, but it is a glory to suffer in so noble a cause! I understand—we must have nothing but illustrious persecutions, that our light may be displayed in darkness, and our vain-glory shine in the midst of our sufferings! We must be gloriously crucified! But do you suppose that, when the martyrs endured such cruel tortures, they were praised by the spectators, and not, on the contrary, cursed and held in execration? Ah, how few persons there are who are

ready to sacrifice their reputation, to promote thereby the glory of Him who died so ignominiously upon the cross, to merit for us a glory that shall have no end!"

"As I was about to repair to Paris, to preach the Lent, he related to me the following anecdote, in order to teach me to make little account of what people might say of me. The superior of a college had given a good old man the charge of a clock, to prevent time from hanging heavy on his hands. But the old man, after a while, found he had never had so worrying and troublesome an office imposed upon him. 'What!' said the superior, 'do you mean the trouble of winding it up twice a-day?' 'Oh, no!' he replied; 'I mean the being bothered on all sides.' 'How so?' rejoined the superior. 'It is,' replied the other, 'because when the clock is rather slow, those who work at the college complain, and so, to please them, I put it on a little. Then the townspeople fall upon me, and say the clock gains; and if I put it back to satisfy them, then I have the others renewing their complaints; so that my head is just like the metal upon which the hammer of the clock strikes, and I am quite bewildered with all this fault-finding.' The superior, to comfort him, said, 'I will give you a good piece of advice, which will keep them all quiet. When the clock gains, and people find fault, say: Leave it to me, I will see and put it back.' 'But the others,' exclaimed the good man, 'will come open-mouthed at me.' 'Say to them,' replied the superior, 'Children, let me alone; I will see that it does not lose. But in the mean time leave the clock alone to go as best it may; only give good and quieting words, and all will be satisfied, and you yourself in peace.'

"'Do you see,' said our Saint to me, 'you are about to be the butt of many contradictory judgments. If you attend to what people say of you, there will be no end of it. What is to be done, then? Give them all good and kind words, but, after all, go your own way; follow your own bias; do not attempt to change it in consequence of all the many hints—most of them con-

trary to each other—which you may receive; look to God, and abandon yourself freely to the leadings of His grace. It ought to be a very small matter to us to be judged of men, since it is not our object to please them; it is God who is our Judge, and who sees the ground of our hearts, and penetrates the darkness of its most hidden recesses.’”

THE SAINT'S DOCTRINE OF PERFECTION, AND MODE OF
SPIRITUAL DIRECTION.

“‘I hear,’ said our Saint sometimes, ‘every one talking about perfection, but I see very few persons who practise it. Each has his own notion of it; some place it in austerity of dress, others in that of eating, others in almsgiving, others in the frequentation of the sacraments, others in prayer, others in a certain species of passive and exalted contemplation, others in those extraordinary graces which are called gratuitous; but all these deceive themselves, mistaking the means or the effects for the cause. As for me, I know of no other perfection than the loving God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves. All other perfection without this is a false perfection. Charity is the one bond of perfection among Christians, and the only virtue which unites us truly with God and with our neighbour, which is our end and ultimate perfection. This is the end of all perfection, and the perfection of every end. I know that austerities, prayer, and other virtuous exercises are excellent means to advance in perfection, provided they are done in charity, and through the motive of charity. We must not, however, place perfection in the means, but in the end to which the means conduct, otherwise it would be a stopping short in the middle of our road before we had reached the goal.’”

“Our Saint set a high value on desires, and said

that upon the good use of them depended all progress of the spiritual edifice. To make great progress in divine love, wherein consists all our perfection, we must have a perpetual desire to love Him more and more, and must resemble those birds which the prophet saw, which always flew right on without ever returning, and that great Apostle who always pressed forwards without looking back, and without reckoning that he had ever attained the goal, because in spiritual things, and in divine love, nothing must ever suffice us; sufficiency here consisting principally in a desire of greater abundance, since in this world charity can always increase, however great we may imagine it to be; its permanent and full-grown state being reserved for heaven. Oh, how greatly did he admire those words of St. Bernard, *Amo quia amo, amo ut amem.** He does not love God enough, who does not desire to love Him more. One who has a generous spirit is not satisfied with loving Him with all his heart, because, knowing that God is greater than his heart, he would wish to have a larger heart, to love Him more.

"He said that the most serious occupation of a true and faithful Christian was, to aim unceasingly at the perfection of his own state; that is, to perfect himself more and more in the state of life in which he finds himself. Now, the perfection of the state of each one of us is, to proportion the means well to the end, and to make use of such as are suited, in our state, to advance us in charity, in which alone consists the true and essential perfection of Christianity, and without which nothing can be called perfect. Our Saint recommended, above all things, to avoid the fault of over-eagerness, which he called the capital enemy and the pest of true devotion. It is better, he said, to do a little, and that well, than to undertake much, and execute it imperfectly. It is not, he observed, by the multiplicity of the things which we do, that we advance

* I love God because I love Him, and I love Him in order to love Him still better.

in perfection, but by the fervour and purity of intention with which we do them. Whence we conclude,

"1st. That our progress in perfection depends, not so much on the multitude of our actions, as on the fervour of holy love with which we perform them.

"2d. That a good action, performed with great fervour, is more meritorious, and more pleasing to God, than many of the same sort performed with tepidity and remissness.

"3d. That purity of intention raises the merit of a good action very high; because, as the end of an action is what imparts to it its value, the more pure and excellent that end is, the more exquisite is the action. Now, what worthier end can we have in our actions than that of God's glory?

"In familiar conversations he would have us speak *little and well*,—that was his constant rule; and in action he would have us not attempt so much, but perform what little we did with great perfection. He highly approved of that saying of an ancient emperor. *Festina lente*.* Another of his favourite mottoes was, 'Soon enough, if well enough.'

"And when it was objected to him, What, then, is to become of that insatiable love of which the masters of the spiritual life speak—that love which never says it is enough, which never thinks it has reached its goal, but which is always pushing on with quick steps?—he replied: 'It is by the roots we must make progress in this love, rather than by the branches.' Which he explained thus: 'To grow in branches is to perform a multitude of virtuous actions, of which many are not only defective, but often superfluous, and like those useless vine-branches which must be pruned to enrich the fruit; and to grow in root is to perform few works, but with much perfection, that is, with much love of God, wherein consists all the perfection of a Christian. It is to this that the Apostle exhorts us, when he tells us to be rooted and founded in charity, if we would know *the*

* Make haste slowly.

*charity of Christ, which surpasseth knowledge.** But it may be said: Can we do too much for God? and must we not make haste to press on before the night of death comes, when no one can work; must we not do all the good we can, while we have the time? All these are adorable truths, and worthy of our deep consideration; but they are not contrary to this maxim, rather to perform a few good and perfect actions than many imperfect ones. To make a solid progress in perfection, it is not so much question of multiplying exercises as increasing the fervour, the strength, and the purity of divine love in our ordinary actions, since a small virtue animated by an ardent, strong, and pure charity, is incomparably more pleasing to God, and gives Him more glory, than a more shining one performed with a tardy, weak, and less purified charity.'

"Our Saint, with reference to this subject, told us one day that some good nuns had once said to him, 'What shall we do, sir, this year? Last year we fasted three times in the week, and took the discipline as often. What shall we do now? for of course we must do something more this year, both as an acknowledgment of gratitude to God for the past, and also that we may continually advance in His service.' 'You are quite right,' I replied, 'in saying that we must be continually advancing; but our progress is not effected, as you imagine, by the multitude of our pious exercises, but by the perfection with which we perform them, ever placing more confidence in God and feeling greater mistrust of ourselves. Last year you fasted three times a week and took the discipline three times; if you wish always to double your exercises, you must give the whole week to them this year; but what will you do next year? You will have to make nine days in the week, or make a double fast each day. Great is their folly who amuse themselves with desiring to go and be martyred in the Indies, and meanwhile do not apply themselves to the duties of their own state; but

* Eph. iii. 17, 19.

great also is the delusion of those who would eat more than they can digest. We have not enough spiritual warmth to digest well all that we take in hand for our perfection, and yet we will not lay aside this anxious spirit which possesses us of desiring to do a great deal.'

"Devotion, he said, was a gentle and tranquil fervour, while eagerness was an indiscreet and turbulent bubble, and pulls down while it thinks to build up. Of all the various species of eagerness, he above all blamed that of trying to do several things at once. He compared it to endeavouring to thread more than one needle at the same time. He who undertakes two works at once succeeds in neither. When he was doing any thing, or speaking of any matter, he gave his whole mind to it, as if that were his only business, and as if it were the last work he should have to perform in this world. Sometimes, when he was seen to spend even whole hours with persons of no consequence, who were talking to him of things of trifling importance, he would say, 'These matters appear to them weighty, and they desire to be comforted, as if they were so in fact. God knows, I do not require any higher employment. All occupations are equal to me, provided they concern His service. While I am engaged in these little works, I am not bound to be doing any thing else. Is not the doing God's will a sufficiently great work? We make little actions great by performing them with a great desire to please God; the merit of our services consisting not in the excellency of the work, but in the love which accompanies them, and the merit of that love in its purity, and of that purity in its unity of intention.'

"Although our Saint possessed the most eminent virtues, nevertheless he had a tender love for the smallest, that is for those which appear such in men's eyes; for there are none, especially of the infused, which are not great in the sight of God. 'Every body,' he said, 'desires to possess the splendid and striking virtues which are attached to the summit of the cross,

that they may be visible from afar and admired of me. But few seek to gather those which, like the sweet thyme, grow at the foot and in the shadow of this tree of life. And yet these are the most fragrant, and have been more abundantly watered with the Saviour's Blood, who taught Christians, as their first lesson, to learn of Him, who was *meek and humble of heart*.^{*} Every one is not called upon to exercise the heroic virtues of fortitude, magnanimity, magnificence, martyrdom, endurance, constancy, valour. The opportunities for practising these are rare; and yet all aspire to them, because they are striking and glorious; and often it will happen that persons, imagining they are capable of them, become puffed up with a vain self-confidence, and when the time for action comes, tumble upon their noses. We do not meet with opportunities for making large sums of money every day, but every day we can gain farthings and pence; and by economising well these little profits, we may in time grow rich. We should heap up great spiritual riches, and lay up much treasure in heaven, if we employed in the service of the holy love of God all the trivial occasions which are presenting themselves every moment. It is not sufficient to perform actions of great virtue, if we do not perform them with great charity; for it is this virtue which gives the foundation, the weight, the price, and the value to good works in the sight of God; and an action of small virtue (for all virtues are not equal in their nature) performed with much love of God, is far more excellent than one of a higher virtue done with less love of God. A cup of cold water given with this great love is meritorious of eternal life. Two pieces of money of very trifling value, given with this same love by a poor widow, were preferred by Jesus Christ Himself to the costly presents which the rich cast into the treasury. People set little value on those slight acts of condescension to the tiresome hu-

^{*} St. Matthew xi. 29

mourne of our neighbour, on bearing his imperfections with sweetness, and modestly putting up with his disagreeable behaviour; on the love of contempt and of our own humiliation; on patience under some slight injustice, or preference of others to ourselves, or affront received, or on the performance of lowly actions beneath our condition; on receiving thankfully; on humbling ourselves to equals and inferiors, and treating our servants with consideration and kindness: all this seems very pitiful to those whose heart is lofty, and whose eyes are exalted. We would have nothing but showy and well-dressed virtues, which reflect credit on us, without considering that they who would please men are not the servants of God, and that the friendship of the world makes us the enemies of God.'"

It was consistent with these views that this great Saint should have attached much higher importance to internal than to exterior mortification, and that his method was to begin from within, laying a solid foundation for the spiritual life, and drawing persons on gently to those external renunciations which were the fruit of a genuine humility and love of God.

"He was in the habit of saying," observes M. de Belley, "that grace in general imitates nature and not art, which only works externally, as, for instance, in painting and sculpture, whereas nature begins its works from within; hence the saying, that the heart is the first to live, and the last to die. When endeavouring to lead souls to a Christian life, and to get them to give up their worldly habits, he did not talk to them of externals, neither of their hair, nor their dress, nor such like things; he spoke only to the heart and of the heart; knowing well that if that fortress was gained, the rest would never hold out. 'See, when a house is on fire,' he said, 'how people throw all the furniture out at the windows. When the true love of God gains possession of a heart, all which is not God seems but little worth.' Some one expressing surprise, one day, that a distinguished lady of great piety, who was under his direc-

tion, had not even left off wearing ear-rings, he replied, 'I assure you I do not so much as know whether she has any ears; for she comes to confession with her head so completely covered up, or with a great scarf so thrown over it, that I do not know how she is dressed. Besides, I believe that that holy woman, Rebecca, who was quite as virtuous as she is, lost nothing of her holiness by wearing the ear-rings which Eliezer presented her on the part of Isaac.' This same lady, having caused some diamonds to be set upon a gold cross she wore, was accused to the holy Bishop of vanity on this account, who replied, that what was reprehended as an instance of vanity, was to him matter of much edification. 'Would,' he said, 'that all the crosses in the world were covered with diamonds and all manner of precious stones: is not this to devote the spoils of the Egyptians to the service of the tabernacle, and to glory in the cross of Jesus Christ? What better use can she make of her jewels than to adorn with them the standard of our redemption?' All through love, nothing through constraint: this was his great motto, and the mainspring of his direction. I have often heard him make this beautiful observation: 'In the royal galley of divine love there is no galley-slave; all the rowers are volunteers.' Upon this principle he never gave a command except in the form of persuasion or request. He desired that in matters of spiritual government men should deal with souls according to the mode observed by God and His angels,—leading them by inspirations, suggestions, illuminations, remonstrances, entreaties, solicitations, in all patience and doctrine; knocking like the spouse at the door of hearts, gently pressing against them that they may open; if so be they open, introducing salvation into them with joy; if they refuse, bearing the denial with gentleness.

"As I complained to the Saint of the opposition I met with, in my diocesan visits, to the good I wished to effect; 'What a domineering spirit you have!' he said. 'You want to walk upon the wings of the wind;

you let your zeal carry you away. You want to do more than God, and constrain the wills of creatures whom God has made free. You deal summarily, as if the wills of your priests were all in your hands. But God, in whose hands are the hearts of all men, does not act thus. He bears with resistance and rebellion against the light He gives; He allows His inspirations to be opposed, even to the grieving of His Spirit; and finally suffers those to destroy themselves who, through the hardness of their impenitent hearts, heap up treasures of wrath against the day of vengeance. Nevertheless, He ceases not to send them inspirations, although men resist His attractions, and say to Him: Depart from us; we will not follow your ways. Our guardian angels imitate His behaviour in this respect; and though we abandon God by our iniquities, they do not abandon us. Do you desire better examples for the regulation of your conduct?

"He was frequently employed to bring about the reform of religious houses; but his method was to advance very gently, practising his own device of making haste slowly; for though divine grace does not love delays, nevertheless he would not have one push on with an injudicious fervour, which is always going into extremes, and fails of doing good from wishing to do too much at once. He desired to advance step by step, often repeating that saying of the wise man, that '*the path of the just as a shining light goeth forwards and increaseth even to perfect day.*'" 'True progress,' he said, 'is from the less to the greater. God Himself, who has no need of time to bring things to perfection, although He powerfully accomplishes the end He proposes to Himself, effects it by such gentle methods, that they are almost imperceptible.' He did not follow the example of those who begin reformation by the exterior, in order to arrive, as they say, at the interior, and stop so long at the bark, that they forget the pith. In introducing a reform into monasteries, he insisted in

those of men only on two points,—the exercise of mental prayer, with its inseparable companion, spiritual reading, and the frequenting of the two sacraments of penance and the Holy Eucharist. 'With these,' he said, 'all will be brought about without effort and without contradiction, gently and gradually.' For women, he required but two things: one corporal, the other spiritual. 1. Enclosure, as enjoined by the Council of Trent: without the observance of this rule, he did not think they could live with reputation, or safety to their honour. 2. Mental prayer twice a day, half an hour each time. 'With attention to these points,' he said, 'a convent of women can be very easily brought back to their duty and the observance of their rule.' Of austerities and corporal mortifications he said nothing, recommending no fasts beyond those of the Church, neither bare feet, nor abstinence from meat, nor disuse of linen, nor night-watchings, nor so many other mortifications;—holy practices, it is true, but which in themselves regard only the exterior. Being consulted one day upon the introduction of bare feet into a religious house, he replied, 'Why don't they leave their shoes and stockings alone? it is the head that wants reforming, not the feet.' He considered that indiscreet austerities are one of the snares into which those who are entering on a devout life are apt to fall. They fancy they can never do too much, as if they would by main force repair their past faults; and they never think they are doing so well as when they are spoiling every thing. The evil spirit, who can fashion his arrows against us out of all kinds of wood, makes use of these immoderate fervours to render them subsequently unfit for the service of God, for want of bodily vigour. We ought to be more discreet, and remember that God desires of us a reasonable service. St. Bernard, in the early days of his conversion, stumbled upon that stone; and towards the end of his life he blamed his past austerities as others blame their excesses, and in his humility called them the errors of his youth. To a nun who, from a motive of penance,

had undertaken more bodily austerities than her delicate and feeble constitution could support, our Saint gave this counsel, worthy of his gentleness and prudence: 'Do not burden your weak body with any austerity beyond what your rule imposes. Preserve your bodily strength to serve God in spiritual exercises, which we are often obliged to retrench when we have indiscreetly overladen the soul's fellow-labourer in their performance. Very few persons, even among such as are spiritual, hold the balance fairly in this matter; the spirit, which is willing, almost always overloading the flesh, which is weak. They do not reflect that as the spirit cannot bear the flesh when it is too well fed, neither can the flesh support the spirit when it is kept too low.'

"Interior mortifications are incomparably more excellent than external ones, and they are not subject, like the latter, to hypocrisy, vanity, and indiscretion. And those which God sends us, or which come to us on the part of men by His permission, are always more precious than such as are the offspring of our own will. These prove a stumbling-block to many who embrace with eagerness the mortifications which their inclination suggests, and which, notwithstanding their apparent severity, are no great trouble to them, on account of the facility which their own predilection imparts; but when they encounter some which proceed from another cause, they find them insupportable, however slight they may be. For instance, such a one will have a strong inclination for the discipline, for hair-shirts, fasts, and sackcloth, but will be so sensitive withal about his reputation, that the most trifling jest or unfavourable observation will put him out of breath, and will trouble his peace of mind and prejudice his reason, carrying him on to deplorable extremities. Another will apply himself with ardour to the exercises of prayer and penance and the practice of silence, who will give way to excessive impatience and anger, and fly out in unmeasured lamentations at the loss of a law-suit, or some trifling damage to property. A third will give alms liberally,

and found magnificent charitable establishments, who will break forth in groans and tremble with fear at the slightest infirmity or sickness, and from whom the most trifling bodily pain draws untold and interminable lamentations. According as each is severally attached to the good things which minister to honour, profit, or pleasure, they bear with more or less patience the ills which are contrary to these species of goods, without considering that it is the hand of God which bestows and takes them away, according to His pleasure. It is, in fact, that we wish to serve God, not according to His Will, but according to our own; in our way, not His. Do you think this is just?

"To cure this malady of the soul, our Saint addresses it in these terms: 'Kiss frequently in your heart the crosses which our Lord Himself has laid upon you. Do not stop to examine if the wood of which they are composed is precious or odoriferous. They are more frequently crosses when they are of a common, vile, and unfragrant wood. It is a good thing that this thought should be ever recurring to me, and that it should be the only song I know; doubtless it is the song of the Lamb; it is somewhat sad, but it is sweet and harmonious: *Father, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.* Magdalen seeks our Lord while holding Him. She inquires for Him of Himself. She did not see Him in the form she desired, and so she was not satisfied with seeing Him thus; she sought Him, that she might find Him otherwise. She desired to see Him in His robe of glory, and not in the mean habit of a gardener. Nevertheless, she knew Him when He said to her *Mary*. Do you see it is our Lord in the gardener's dress whom you meet every day here and there in the little common mortifications which happen to you? you would wish Him to offer you more brilliant mortifications. O my Lord, the most brilliant are not the best. Do you not believe that He says to you, *Mary, Mary?* No, before you behold Him in His glory, He wishes to plant in your garden many little lowly flowers, but flowers

much to His taste; this is why He wears this attire. May our hearts be ever united to His, and our wills to His good pleasure!

"Our Saint was in the habit of blaming a rather common mistake amongst persons making a special profession of piety, who frequently apply themselves to the practice of the virtues least conformable to their state, and neglect those which are the most suited to it. 'This disorder,' he said, 'proceeds from the distaste which men very commonly feel for the occupations which their duties impose upon them. As relaxation gradually finds its way into convents when their inmates wish to limit themselves to the practice of the virtues belonging to the secular state; so, on the other hand, it is a source of no less trouble in private families, where an indiscreet and injudicious devotion would seek to introduce into them the exercises of the cloister. Some persons fancy they are highly extolling a secular household, when they say it resembles a religious house, and that the life led within it is quite conventual; forgetting that this is to seek to gather figs on thorn-bushes, or grapes on brambles. Not but that these exercises are good and holy; but we must consider and take into account the circumstances of place, time, persons, and condition. An ill-ordered charity is no longer charity; it is a fish out of water, and a tree transplanted into a soil which is not fit for it.' He compared this inconsistency of mind, which exhibits so great a deficiency of good sense and judgment, to the caprice of those epicures who wish to have fresh cherries at Christmas, and ice in the month of August, not being satisfied with eating of each thing in its proper season.

"There is nothing so common in the world, and perhaps out of the world, as dissatisfaction with our state in life. When the enemy cannot induce us to sin by open temptations, he attacks us on one side, and when he cannot make us stumble, he does all he can to disturb us; and there are no more vexatious subjects of disquietude, or productive of more bitterness, than

which incline us to dissatisfaction with our state in life. The Holy Spirit speaking in the Scriptures cries to us, *Let every one abide in the state to which God has called him*; and the evil spirit suggests nothing so much to us as to leave and change it. This is why the great secret is to stick firmly by the boat in which God has placed us, that we may make a prosperous voyage through life to the harbour of a blessed eternity. Such was our Saint's opinion, which he thus expressed: 'Do not amuse your mind with other matters. Do not sow your desires in other men's fields; be contented with cultivating your own well. Desire not to be what you are not, but desire to be excellently well what you are. Let your thoughts be occupied with perfecting yourself in this, and in bearing the crosses, be they great or small, which you meet therein. Believe me, this is the great secret, and the least understood of the spiritual life. Each loves according to his taste, few according to their duty and our Lord's taste. What is the use of building castles in Spain (castles in the air), if our lot is cast in France? It is my old lesson. You know it well.'

To sum up, as given by M. de Belley, the opinions of St. Francis upon the relative importance of the virtues as conducing to our perfection:

"1. He preferred those the practice of which is the most frequent and common, to such as are seldomer called into exercise.

"2. He would not have us judge of the comparative supernatural merit of a virtue by the greatness of its external act; inasmuch as a virtue apparently small may be practised with much grace and charity, and a more splendid one with a very feeble degree of the love of God, which nevertheless is the rule and the measure of their true value in His sight.

"3. He preferred the more universal virtues to such as are more limited in their reach, charity always excepted. For instance, he had a higher esteem for prayer, which is the torch of all the rest; for devotion,

which consecrates all our actions to the service of God; for humility, which makes us have a low opinion of ourselves and of our actions; for gentleness, which makes us yield to every one; for patience, which makes us endure all things; than for magnanimity, magnificence, or liberality, both because they regard fewer objects, and because they have less scope.

"4. The shining virtues were regarded by him with a little suspicion; for their splendour, he observed, gives a strong handle to vain-glory, which is the very poison of all virtue.

"5. He blamed those who esteem virtues only according to the value set upon them by the generality of men, who are very bad judges of that kind of merchandise. Thus, they will prefer temporal to spiritual alms; hair-shirts, fasting, and bodily austerities, to meekness, modesty, and mortification of heart, which are nevertheless far more excellent.

"6. He reproved also those who would only practise the virtues which were conformable to their taste, without troubling themselves about those which more especially belonged to their office and the duties of their state, serving God according to their own fashion, not according to His will; which is so frequent an abuse, that we see numbers of persons, and these among the devout, who are carried away by it."

THE SAINT'S MORTIFICATION, AND HIS OPINIONS UPON THIS
SUBJECT AND THAT OF PRAYER.

"It was a golden saying of our Saint, and one I have sometimes heard from his own lips, that he who mortifies the most his natural inclinations, attracts the greater abundance of supernatural inspirations; and assuredly interior and exterior mortification are a great means to draw down upon us the favours of heaven. provided they be practised in and by charity. As the

heavenly manna was not given to Israel in the desert, until they had consumed all the flour they had brought out of Egypt, so also the divine favours are seldom vouchsafed to those who are still following their worldly inclinations. It was his opinion, that mortification without prayer was a body without a soul; and prayer without mortification a soul without a body. He wished these two to be never separated, but that, like Marthe and Mary, they should, without disputing, combine to serve the Lord. He compared them to the two scales of a balance, of which the one rises when the other sinks. To raise the mind by prayer, the body must be kept down by mortification, otherwise the flesh will weigh down the spirit, and hinder it from raising itself to God. The lily and the rose of prayer and contemplation are preserved and nourished well only amidst the thorns of mortification. We ascend the hill of incense, the symbol of prayer, only by the mountain of the myrrh of mortification. Incense itself, which represents prayer, exhales its fragrance only when it is burnt; neither can prayer ascend to heaven with a sweet odour, unless it proceeds from a mortified person. When we are dead to ourselves and our passions, it is then that we live to God, and that He feeds us in time of prayer with the bread of life and light, and with the manna of His inspirations.

"Our Saint had a remarkable saying on this subject: 'We must live in this world as if our spirits were in heaven, and our bodies in the tomb. We must live, he said, 'a dying death, and die a living and life-giving death, in the life of our king, our flower, our sweetest Saviour. To live a dying death, is to live, not according to the senses and natural inclinations, but according to the spirit and the supernatural inclinations. It is a death according to nature, but a life according to the spirit. It is to cause the old man to die in us, that the new man may arise from his ashes. And to die a living and life-giving death is, to mortify and crucify the flesh, with its desires; to cause the spirit to live of the life of

grace, which has been merited for us by the life and death of Jesus Christ, who knows how to extract life from death, as Samson drew the honeycomb and the meat from the jaw of the devouring lion. And assuredly, unless we die with Jesus Christ, we shall not live with Him; and if we do not suffer with Him, we shall not reign with Him.'

"He was so adroit during his lifetime in his use and concealment of instruments of penance, that the servant who waited on him at rising and going to bed never perceived them; and death alone revealed this secret, and manifested what he had always so carefully hidden. One instance may suffice. His servant found a little water left in a basin of a reddish hue, as if tinged with blood; not being able to guess the cause—for it was some water he had brought the Saint to wash his hands—he observed him so closely, that he ascertained that he washed his discipline, which was tinged with blood, in this basin, and then having thrown away the water, a little remained at the bottom, which had given rise to the suspicion.

"He often repeated this Gospel maxim, *Eat such things as are set before you*,* inferring that it was a greater mortification to be ready to accommodate one's taste to every thing, than always to choose the worst. The choicest dishes are often, for all that, not the most to our taste; and to receive them, therefore, without testifying any aversion, is no small mortification. It inconvenienced him alone who thus puts a constraint upon himself. He considered that there was a want of politeness, when at table, in taking or asking for some dish not near you, declining what is in your immediate neighbourhood. This, he said, was to betray a mind attentive to dishes and sauces. But if this be done, not from sensuality, but in order to choose the commonest food, there is in this proceeding a spice of asceticism, which is as inseparable from ostentation as

* Luke x. 4.

smoke is from fire. As it is quite possible to be gluttonous on a cabbage, so also may we be temperate upon partridges; but to be indifferent to both is to exhibit a mortification of the taste which is by no means common. It is a more difficult act to eat of dainty food without relishing it, than to restrict ourselves to coarse fare of which we partake with satisfaction.

"One day he had been dining on eggs poached in water; and when he had finished them, he began dipping his bread in the water, as he had done in the eggs. Those who were at table with him smiled at observing this inadvertence, and having asked the cause, he said, 'You certainly were very wrong to undeceive me of so agreeable an illusion; for I assure you I never ate a sauce with greater relish. My good appetite, perhaps, had not a little share in it; so true is the proverb, that hunger is the best sauce.' This little incident reminds us of St. Bernard, who drank some oil believing it to be wine, so little attention did he pay to what he was eating or drinking.

"One day, when I had helped him to rather a delicate morsel, and observed that he had quietly pushed it into a corner of his plate, and was eating something common, 'I have caught you out,' I exclaimed; 'what becomes of the evangelical precept, *Eat such things as are set before you*?' He replied very sweetly, 'You don't know, perhaps, that I have a very rustic stomach, like a peasant's; if I do not eat something solid and coarse, I feel as if I had taken no nourishment; these delicacies seem like nothing at all, and do not support me.' 'My father,' I replied, 'this is one of your tricks; these are the veils which you throw over your austerities.' 'I am really using no disguise,' he rejoined; 'I speak with all frankness and sincerity. However, to tell you my full mind without reserve or concealment, I do not deny that delicate meats are more pleasing to my taste than coarser food. I do not wish for high salting, spicing, and flavouring, to make the wine taste better; we Savoyards relish it sufficiently without

that; but as we sit down to table rather to sustain our bodies than to gratify our sensuality, I take what I know nourishes me most and suits me best; for you know we must eat to live, not live to eat, that is, to be an epicure about choice bits, and to give our attention to dishes, and the variety of food before us. However, to do honour to your good cheer, if you will wait patiently, I will satisfy you; for after laying the foundation of the repast by these more solid and nutritious viands, I will roof it in with the slates of the more delicate morsels which you please to give me.' How many virtues go to form this apparently trivial action! Sincerity, truth, candour, simplicity, temperance, sobriety, condescendence, benevolence, prudence, equanimity. Gracious souls, whose actions are all performed by the movements of grace, produce nothing trifling; for the works of God are perfect, especially the works of His grace, and so they have glory for their crown. *Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, says the Apostle, do all to the glory of God.**

"Our Saint set a great value on a common mode of life; for this reason, he would not have the daughters of the Visitation, which he founded, practise any extraordinary austerities in dress, sleeping, or food; the rules he laid down for their food, fasts, and clothing being similar to those observed by such as would live a Christian life in the world. In which respect these good daughters are imitators of Jesus Christ, of His holy Mother, and of the Apostles, who followed this mode of life, leaving it to the judgment and discretion of superiors to permit or prescribe extraordinary mortifications, according to the needs of individuals who may require this treatment. Not but that our Saint valued bodily austerities; but he wished them to be made use of with a zeal accompanied by knowledge, thus preserving the purity of the body without ruining the health. In a word, he preferred the life of Jesus

Christ to that of John the Baptist. To *know how to abound, and how to suffer want*, according to the saying of St. Paul, was a favourite text with him. He said that it was more difficult to know how to abound than how to suffer want. A thousand fall at the left hand of adversity, but ten thousand at the right of prosperity; so hard is it to keep a straight course when we want for nothing: which made Solomon say, *Give me neither beggary nor riches; give me only the necessities of life.** He who can kiss with an equable mind each hand of God, has attained a high point of Christian perfection, and shall find salvation in the Lord.

"He never took recreation for his own pleasure, but only from a spirit of condescension. He had no garden attached to the two houses which he occupied during his episcopacy; and he never took a walk except when company necessitated his doing so, or the doctor had ordered it for his health; for he was very punctual in his obedience to such directions. Herein his practice resembled the austerity of St. Charles Borromeo, who could not endure that, after meals, the company he received should amuse themselves by spending their time in useless conversations, saying that it was unworthy of a pastor charged with so large and weighty a diocese, and who had so many better occupations. This was natural in a saint whose life was an especial pattern of severity; so that no one thought it strange when he broke off the conversation on such occasions, to seek elsewhere wherewithal to employ that great zeal for souls and for the house of God which consumed him. Our Saint was of a more indulgent spirit, and did not withdraw from conversation after meals. When I was on a visit to him, he used to seek to recreate me after the labour of preaching. He would take me on in a boat on that beautiful lake which bathes the walls of Annecy, or to walk in some pleasant gardens on its fair banks. When he came to see me at Belley, he did

* Prov. xiii. 2.

not decline similar recreations, in which I invited him to indulge; but he never proposed them, or sought them of his own accord. Again, when persons spoke to him of buildings, paintings, music, hunting, birds, plants, gardening, flowers, he did not blame those who took an interest in these things, but he would have desired that they should make use of these occupations as so many means to raise themselves to God; and he himself set the example, by drawing from all these subjects motives for heavenly aspirations. If beautiful plants were pointed out to him, 'We are,' he would observe, 'the field which God cultivates.' If some magnificent and splendidly-adorned church, 'We are the temples,' he would say, 'of the living God. O that our souls were as richly adorned with virtues!' If flowers, 'When shall our flowers yield fruit?' If rare and exquisite paintings, 'There is nothing so fair as the soul, which is made to the image of God.' If taken into a garden, he would exclaim, 'O when shall the garden of our soul be sown with flowers, and filled with fruit, weeded, dressed, and trimmed? When shall it be fenced in, and closed against every thing which is displeasing to the heavenly Gardener?' On beholding fountains, 'When shall we possess within our hearts the source of living water, springing up to life everlasting? How long shall we forsake the source of life, to dig for ourselves leaking cisterns? O, when shall we draw to our content from the Saviour's fountains?' "

M. de Belley gives other similar instances, and concludes with these words: "Thus he beheld God in all things, and all things in God; or rather, he beheld but one thing—God only.

"Our Saint used to say that by interior recollection we retired into God, or drew God within ourselves. 'But when and where can we have recourse to it? At all times and in all places. Neither repast, nor company, nor change, nor occupation, can hinder it, as neither does it hinder or interfere with any action; on the contrary,

It is a salt which seasons every kind of meat, or rather a sugar which spoils no sauce. It consists only in interior looks between the soul and God,—of our souls towards God and of God upon our souls; and the simpler this recollection is, the better. As for aspirations, they are short but ardent bounds towards God; and the more vehement and loving an aspiration is, the better it is. All these bounds or aspirations are so much the better, as they are shorter. That of St. Bruno seems to me very excellent for its brevity: 'O goodness!'—as also that of St. Francis: 'My God, my all!'—of St. Augustine: 'To love! to die to self! to attain to God!' These two exercises are mutually connected, and succeed each other, as do the acts of inhaling and exhaling. For even as when we inhale we draw the fresh air from without into our lungs, and in exhaling we breathe forth warm air, so inhaling by recollection we draw God within us, and by aspiration we cast ourselves into the arms of His goodness. Happy the soul which thus inhales and exhales; for by this means it dwells in God and God in it.

"There are persons who become discouraged in prayer, and are even led to discontinue it, not on account of the difficulties they meet with, but because, as they say, they are unfaithful to the resolutions formed at that time, and dread incurring more guilt than if they formed none at all. Our Saint looked upon this as a very dangerous stratagem of the enemy. 'Men wait,' he said, 'a whole year to reap an ear of corn from a grain they have cast into the earth; and many years to eat apples from a pip they have sown. We must never leave the exercise of prayer except to attend to more important work; and even then we must repair the loss by frequent aspirations. And we must never give over making resolutions during this exercise, for they are the special fruit of prayer; and although we may not at once put them in execution, and may give in and draw back on the first occasions, nevertheless those seeds do not fail to take root in our hearts, and

to bear fruit at another season, even when we have no recollection of having made them. And supposing we accomplished nothing further by these resolutions than exercising ourselves in spiritual courage, these acts of goodwill would still be pleasing to God, who *understands our thoughts afar off, and who searches out our path and our line.** Supposing we did no more than the pupils who take lessons in a reading or fencing-school, it would still be something; and such an one, as the old saying has it, will run away to-day, who will fight valiantly at some future time. We must never, then, lose heart, but say with the prophet, *In the Lord I put my trust: how then do you say to my soul, Get thee away from hence to the mountain like a sparrow †* Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why dost thou disquiet me? *Hope thou in God.‡* Yes, we will indeed still give praise to Him, and serve Him some day, for He is my salvation, my strength, and my true God.

"I asked our Saint one day if it was not better to choose one single point for the subject of our prayer, and to draw from it one affection only and one resolution. He replied, that unity and simplicity in all things, but more particularly in spiritual exercises, was always preferable to multiplicity; that it was only beginners who were advised to take several for the subject of their meditation. With regard to the multiplicity of affections and resolutions, he said that when spring was prodigal of flowers, then it was that the bees made less honey, inasmuch as, taking pleasure in hovering about over this abundance, they did not allow themselves time to extract the juice and essence of which their honeycomb is formed. Drones, he added, make a great deal of noise and very little profit. When asked whether it was not better to return frequently to the same affection and resolution, the better to imprint them on the soul, he said that we ought to imitate painters and sculptors, who accomplish their work by means of re-

* Ps. cxxxviii. 2.

† Ps. x. 1.

‡ Ps. xli. 12.

iterated strokes of the pencil and the chisel; and that to make a deep impression on our hearts it was necessary often to repeat the same thing. He added, that as in swimming those who throw their arms and legs rapidly about sink, whereas they ought to move them gently and leisurely, so also those who are too eager in prayer consume themselves in vain reflections, and their dissipated thoughts torment their hearts.*

"In reply to the question, how we are to understand the saying, attributed by our Saint to the great St. Anthony, that he who is engaged in prayer ought to have his attention so completely occupied with God that he ought even to forget he is praying, inasmuch as this reflection upon his act implies attention, and if not in itself a distraction, is at least an occasion of distraction, by opening the door to it, I reply by our Saint's doctrine on this subject, that we must keep our soul steadily fixed in prayer, without allowing it to cast off upon itself to observe what it is about, or if it is praying to its own satisfaction. Alas! our satisfactions and consolations do not satisfy the eyes of God, but only that miserable love and care which we bestow upon ourselves, in which God and consideration for Him have no part. Children certainly, whom our Lord points out to us as the models of our perfection, have, generally speaking, none of this solicitude, particularly in their parents' company; they cling to them, without turning round to contemplate their own satisfactions or consolations, which they enjoy, it is true, but in all simplicity, and without curiously considering their causes and effects; love being sufficient occupation to them, and allowing them to do nothing else. He who is very attentive lovingly to please the heavenly Lover, has neither the heart nor the leisure to contemplate himself, his mind continually turning in the direction in which love impels him. He did not approve of minds which were given to too much reflection, making a hundred considerations upon trifling matters. They resemble, he said, silkworms, which im-

* Job xvii. 11.

prison and entangle themselves in their own work. These perpetual reflections upon self and our own actions take up a great deal of time, which might be more profitably employed than in looking so constantly at what we are about. By dint of looking to see if we are doing things well, we do them ill. Each occupation has its appropriate time; there is a time for action, and a time for reflecting on our actions. The painter does not stop at every stroke of his brush to judge of his work, but only at intervals.

"Our Saint was so great a friend to unity, that all multiplicity was, if not disagreeable to him, at any rate suspicious. He approved highly of the advice attributed to St. Thomas, to make some one book our special study, if we would study to advantage. Accordingly, he applauded those who for their spiritual guidance attached themselves to some one book of devotion, such as *The Spiritual Combat*, his own favourite book; *The Method of Serving God*, which with his sanction I chose for myself; *The Following of Jesus Christ*, Louis of Grenada's *Guide*, or his *Memorial*, and such-like; not that he would set aside others, but he wished them to come in as accessories, and as it were commentaries on the chief book. He was of the same opinion with respect to spiritual exercises. He wished persons to choose one of these exercises for more frequent practice; either the presence of God, which he specially recommended; or purity of intention, which he much approved; or submission to the will of God, which he highly esteemed; or self-abandonment into God's hands, and self-renunciation, which he valued much, as including generally all Christian perfection. In like manner he would have us choose some particular virtue, as humility, gentleness, patience, mortification, prayer, mercy, and such-like, for special practice; just as religious institutes, which cultivate some distinguishing virtue, which constitutes their spirit, without neglecting the others. Upon this principle he did not augur well of those persons whom he saw fluttering from one exer-

cise to another, from one book to another, from one practice to another; comparing them to drones, who alight on every flower without extracting honey from any; ever learning, without ever attaining to the true science of saints; always gathering, collecting, and heaping up, without becoming rich, because they put every thing into a bag with a hole in it, and dig cisterns for themselves which will not hold water; restless spirits, who, seeking peace in spiritual riches, find it not,—like persons smitten with the malady of jealousy, to whom every thing furnishes materials for its maintenance, and nothing gives relief. With reference to this subject of multiplicity, he told me he preferred one ejaculatory prayer or aspiration repeated a hundred times to a hundred ejaculations each said once, alleging the example of the saints; as St. Francis, who sometimes passed whole days and weeks in repeating 'My God is my All!' and St. Bruno, 'O Goodness!' and St. Teresa, 'All that is not God is nothing.' And he added, that the longer a bee tarries on a flower, the more honey it extracts."

With regard to dryness and aridity in prayer, the Saint's opinions are recorded several times by M. de Belley: "'We always love,' he said, 'the sweetness and delightful suavity of consolations; nevertheless, the rigour of aridities is more rich in fruit; and though St. Peter loved the mountain of Thabor, and fled from that of Calvary, the latter nevertheless is the most profitable, and the blood shed upon the one is more desirable than the brightness which environs the other. It is better to eat bread without sugar, than sugar without bread. Blessed is that soul which remains faithful in the midst of drynesses and deprivation of all sensible consolations. They form the crucible in which the pure gold of charity is perfectly refined. Happy he who bears this trial with patience; for having been tried and purified in this manner, he shall receive the crown which God has promised to those whom He loves and who love Him. When God,' he said, 'deprives us sometimes of those

consolations, and of the sense of His presence, it is in order that our heart should cleave to nothing sensible, but to Him only and His good pleasure; as He dealt with her who desired to embrace and cling to His feet, sending her elsewhere with these words, *Touch me not; but go tell my brethren*, &c. Jacob certainly was able to take off the skin with which his mother had covered his neck and hands, because it did not adhere to him; but if any one had endeavoured to tear off Esau's, it would have been very painful, and would have made him cry out. So also when we cry out upon God's withdrawing sensible consolations, it is a sign that they cleave to our heart, or that our heart was attached to them; but when we bear this privation without complaining, it is a very evident mark that God alone is the portion of our heart, and that the creature does not share it with Him. Blessed is the soul of which God only is the lord and the possessor."

THE SAINT'S LOVE OF HIS ENEMIES.—PATIENCE AND KINDNESS.

"A friend of his having confessed to him that he found no duty of Christianity so difficult to practise as that of the love of enemies, 'As for me,' he said, 'I don't know how my heart is constituted, or if it has pleased God to make me an altogether new one, but I not only experience no difficulty in complying with this command, but I have such a pleasure in it, and feel so delightful and peculiar a sweetness in it, that if God had forbidden me to love them, I should find it very hard to obey Him.'

"Having received a notable insult from an individual, and having endeavoured to appease him by urging several good reasons with incomparable sweetness, he concluded by saying, 'After all, I would have you to know, that if you had put out one of my eyes, I would look at you with the other as affectionately as if you were the best friend I possessed.' 'Shall we not

bear,' he would say, 'with those whom God Himself bears, having before our eyes that great example, Jesus Christ, praying on the cross for His enemies? Who would not love him, this dear enemy for whom Jesus Christ prayed, and for whom He died!'

"People would occasionally come and tell him that he was evil spoken of by some persons who asserted strange things of him. Instead of excusing and defending himself, he would reply with sweetness, 'Is that all they say? O really, they don't know all. They flatter me, they spare me, I see they have more pity for me than envy, and wish me to be better than I am. Well, God be praised! I must correct myself: if I do not deserve blame in this matter, I deserve it in some other; it is any how treating me with mercy to be so lenient of censure.' If some one undertook his justification, and said the accusation was false, 'Well,' he would reply, 'it is a warning to me to take care not to make it true. Is it not a favour to caution me to turn aside from this pitfall? But who has ever told us that we were irreprehensible? Perhaps they discern my faults better than I do myself, or those who love me. We often call truths evil-speaking when they are distasteful to us. What harm do people do us by having an ill opinion of us? Ought we not to think ill of ourselves? Such persons are not our adversaries but our partisans, for they join with us to work the destruction of our self-love. Why be angry with those who come to our aid against so powerful an enemy?' It was thus he made light of calumnies and insults, considering that silence and modesty were quite sufficient defence, without calling patience to our support against such a trifle.

"Among the virtues, he highly esteemed that which makes us bear with sweetness the importunity of our neighbour. 'A little gentleness, moderation, and modesty,' he said, 'are sufficient for this purpose. People talk as if patience was to be exercised only in bearing those afflictions which reflect credit on us.' However

while awaiting these great and signal occasions, when some but seldom during our life, we neglect the lesser; and so far from making any account of bearing with our neighbour's importunity, we, on the contrary, reckon those persons as weak who put up with them. We imagine that our patience is equal to the endurance of great sufferings and signal insults, and we give way to impatience at the most trifling annoyance. It seems to us as if we could assist, serve, and relieve our neighbour in great and prolonged illness,—and we cannot bear with his tiresome humours, his want of polish, his incivility, but above all with his importunities, when he comes unreasonably and unseasonably to take up our time with what appear to us trifling and frivolous matters. To excuse our impatience we vainly allege the value of time, of which an ancient writer has said that it is praiseworthy to be avaricious; and we fail to observe that we ourselves consume it in so many vainer ways than in bearing with our neighbour, and possibly in things which are in themselves less important than those he would occupy us with, and which we call loss of time. When conversing with our neighbour, we ought to take pleasure in it, and show that we do so; and when we are alone we must take pleasure in solitude. But the misfortune is, that our minds are so restless, that we are always looking behind us; in company longing for solitude, and in solitude, instead of enjoying its sweetness, desiring conversation. We ought to have a more even and reasonable temper of mind, and in the time allotted to recreation love recreation; and in like manner love reading, prayer, and work at the times appropriated to them, as well as silence when commanded by the rule and by obedience. Thus we may say with the prophet, *I will bless the Lord at all times, His praise shall be ever in my mouth*; for it is to bless and praise the Lord at all times, to refer to His glory all our actions, whether good or indifferent."

We have already seen St. Francis exhibiting this

virtue in a striking manner in his own practice. Here is a further instance recorded by M. de Belley :

" During the last visit he made to Paris, where he remained about eight months, he was in such request on all sides, that he had to preach almost every day; this brought on an illness, which, though of short duration, was very dangerous. Some of his friends, anxious for his health, warned him that he was undertaking too much for his strength; to which he made answer, that they whose office constituted them the lights of the world, ought, like torches, to consume themselves in order to illuminate others. But, not satisfied with this, they added, that it rendered the word of God less precious in his mouth, the world only valuing what is rare; every one runs to look at the moon, but no one gets up earlier to see the sun rise, and yet it is much the most admirable luminary of the two. ' I should certainly, then,' replied the good Bishop, ' have to appoint a vicar to refuse for me; for the very word I announce, teaching me that we are debtors to all men, and that we must not only lend but give ourselves to all who ask for us, and that true charity neither seeks nor consults its own interests but those of God and its neighbour, how could I bring myself to disappoint and send away such as ask for me? Not to speak of the rudeness, it appears to me that it would be a great defect of fraternal love. How far removed are we still from the class of those two great saints, one of whom was willing to be blotted out of the book of life for his brethren, and the other to be anathema and separated from Jesus Christ, which comes to the same thing!'

" On one occasion he was asked to preach on a festival; he immediately acquiesced; and upon one of his servants reminding him that some days previously he had promised to preach elsewhere the same day. ' Never mind,' he said; ' God will give us the grace to multiply our bread. He is rich in mercy to such as call upon Him.' " M. de Belley adds that, " Being

availed with entreaties to consider his health, he cut the matter short by saying, 'I assure you, that if I had been asked for a third sermon the same day, I should have less trouble of mind and body in delivering them all, than in refusing. Must we not consume ourselves, body and soul, for this dear neighbour whom our Lord so loved as to die of love for him?' "

M. de Belley tells us that he practised literally, both in temporal and spiritual things, the Gospel injunction to give to whoever asks of us, and assures us, from his own experience, that he never made a just request of him but he granted it, or gave him a refusal more just than his request, and more just even according to his own judgment; his refusals, moreover, being seasoned with so much graciousness that they were infinitely more pleasing than the favours of many who grant them so ungraciously as to make them no favours at all. "And I never heard," he continues, "of his having ever refused any reasonable service which was requested of him."

The accessible disposition of this sweetest of saints encouraged numbers of women to have recourse to his spiritual advice, and to seek his direction. This was made matter of reproach to him, and the Bishop of Belley relates how some one abruptly taxed him, one day, with being constantly surrounded by them. "The Saint gently reminded him that so it was with our Lord, and that many murmured at it. 'But,' resumed his assailant, who had made this remark rather lightly, 'I really don't know what amusement they find in it, for I do not perceive that you keep the conversation up very briskly, or that you say any great matter to them.

And do you reckon for nothing,' replied the Saint, letting them have their say? They most certainly want ears to listen to them, more than tongues to reply. They talk enough for themselves and for me too; possibly it is this readiness to listen to them which forms their attraction, for there is nothing a loquacious person likes so much as a quiet and patient listener.' The other,

continuing the same freedom of observation, said that he had watched his confessional, and had taken notice that for one man there were crowds of women who besieged it. 'What wonder?' he replied; 'this sex is more disposed to piety; this is why the Church applies to it the epithet of *devout*. Would to God that men, who commit much worse sins, had as much inclination for penance!' The other, getting bolder every minute, now asked him if more women were saved than men. 'Seriously speaking,' said the Saint, 'it is not for us to pry into the secrets of God, or to be His counsellors;' and by this answer he cut short the conversation."

That he, nevertheless, well knew how to unite circumspection with kindness, is thus exemplified:

"There was a prelate who would not permit any woman, no matter who she might be, to enter his house, grounding his conduct upon the example and counsel of St. Augustine. He had accordingly caused a kind of parlour to be constructed, with a species of *grille*, in a chapel, where he spoke to them. The Saint, who loved this prelate, without blaming this severity, limited himself to laughing pleasantly at it, saying, that this bishop was only half a pastor, since he separated himself thus from the moiety of his flock. Upon the complaints which were made to him on the subject, he promised to speak to the prelate. The bishop, in his defence, alleged his age (for he was still young), his fear of calumnious tongues and of the snare into which such conversation led, the advice of the ancient fathers, the good example thus held out to other ecclesiastics, and many such-like reasons. Our Saint praised his zeal and caution, but observed that, without practising this external severity, there was an easier, surer, and less inconvenient means, and one less subject to censure or interference. 'Never speak to women,' he said, 'but in the presence of others; and charge your attendants never to lose sight of you when you have to confer with them. I do not mean that it is necessary they should invariably hear what you say; for that

would not be always expedient, as these matters often regard the conscience; but let them be within sight, and witnesses of your behaviour; and if you will commission one of your chaplains, the same to whom you commit the charge of your interior, to admonish you concerning your deportment and actions, believe me that this will be worth all the grating in the world, were it even of iron and bristling with spikes.' Now the advice he gave was what he himself practised; for though his house was open to every one, he never spoke to women, wherever he might be, without being attentively watched. He gave another piece of advice touching letters. 'Do not write to women,' he said, 'except in answer to their letters, unless there be some urgent necessity; but never of your own accord, save in the case of individuals beyond suspicion, such as a mother, a sister, or a very old person; and let your letters even then be only occasional and brief.'"

The needy never applied to him in vain, and his purse, poorly furnished as it ever was, never closed at the voice of the suppliant. We have a specimen here of his readiness to give, and his unwillingness to refuse even those whom some might have considered little worthy of his liberality:

"A person made bold to beg him to lend him twelve crowns, and insisted on giving him a written promise of payment, in spite of the Saint's disinclination, who not only did not require it but objected to having it, and this promise by the borrower's own desire was limited to the term of a month. The month was prolonged to a year, at the end of which time the person returned, and without alluding to the twelve crowns already lent, asked for ten. The Saint, begging him to wait in the reception-room, went to fetch the written engagement, and rejoining him, said, 'You beg me to lend you only ten crowns, here are twelve, which I willingly give you;' so saying, he returned him his promise.

"Another begged to borrow twenty crowns, and desired to give his written acknowledgment. The Saint

had not always so large a sum at his disposal; nevertheless, he had so kind a heart, that he would have cut himself into pieces for his neighbour. He bethought himself, therefore, of a device which would relieve the petitioner, and yet render his liberality proportionate to his means. He went to look for ten crowns, and returning, said, 'I have hit upon an expedient which will make us both gain ten crowns to-day, if you will only believe me.' 'How is that to be done, Monseigneur?' asked the man. 'We have only,' he replied, 'you and I, both of us, to open our hands. Here are ten crowns, which I give you as a pure donation, instead of lending you twenty; you gain those ten, and as for me, I shall reckon the other ten as good as gained if you will excuse me from lending you them.'

"Condescension to the humours of others, and the sweet but most reasonable endurance of our neighbour, were his cherished and special virtues; and he was constantly recommending them to his dear children. He often said to me, 'O how much shorter work it is to accommodate ourselves to others, than to wish to bend every one to our own humours and opinions! The human mind is a true mirror, which easily assumes all the colours presented to it; the important point is, that we should not resemble theameleon, which is susceptible of all except white; for a condescension which is not accompanied by candour and purity is a dangerous condescension, and cannot be too diligently shunned. We must condescend in every thing, even to the very altar, that is, up to the point where God is not offended: here are the limits of true condescension.'

"Never did he utter a word of menace, or use an angry expression to his servants; and when they were guilty of faults, he seasoned his reproofs with so much sweetness, that they corrected themselves from love, without dreading a rod of iron, which they knew well he had not in his hand. One day, conversing with him about the manner in which servants ought to be treated, and observing that familiarity was apt to breed com-

tempt, 'Yes,' he said, 'unbecoming, coarse, and reprehensible familiarity, but never that which is civil, cordial, proper, and virtuous; for as it proceeds from love, love produces its like; and true love is never without esteem, and consequently without respect for the person loved, seeing that our love is, in fact, founded upon the esteem in which we hold him.' 'But,' said I, 'we must then give up every thing to them, and let them do as they like.' 'No; I only say that if charity reign in our hearts, she will know how to allot their proper parts to discretion, prudence, justice, moderation, magnanimity, as well as to humility, abjection, patience, endurance, and gentleness. With regard to servants, I must say, after all, they are our neighbours and lowly brethren, whom charity obliges us to love as ourselves; let us then love them as we do ourselves, these dear neighbours who are so near to us and so truly our neighbours, and who live under the same roof with us and eat of our bread; and let us treat them as ourselves, or rather as we should wish to be treated if we were in their place and condition; this is the best way to behave to servants. It is true, we must not overlook their faults when they are considerable, nor spare to correct them; but we must at the same time recognise the service they render us; and it is well occasionally to testify our satisfaction with it, and our confidence in them, and to show them that we account them as brethren, or as friends, whose necessities we wish to relieve, and whose welfare we desire to promote. As a puff of wind in the sails of a galley out at sea fetches it on more than a hundred strokes of the oar, so also we must admit that a friendly word and a token of kindness will get more service out of a servant than a hundred grave, threatening, and severe injunctions.'

According to his great maxim of asking for nothing and refusing nothing, he was in the habit of not declining little presents which the poor people would bring him even on occasions of the administration of the sacraments. It was quite edifying at such times to observe

the countenance and kindness with which he would accept a handful of nuts, chestnuts, or apples, or little cheeses or eggs, which children or poor people would offer him. Others would give him pence or farthings, which he would accept, humbly thanking them. He would receive even three or four pence (half-pence, English) sent him from some village for masses, which he would be most punctual in offering. The money which was given him, he distributed to the poor, whom he met coming out of church; but the eatables he received he carried away in his rochet or in his pockets, setting them on some little platters in his room, or handing them over to his steward, and directing him to serve them up at table; saying sometimes, *Labores manuum tuarum quia manducabis; beatus es, et bene tibi erit.**

He had a special regard for innkeepers who receive travellers; and if they were but civil and obliging, he reckoned them quite saints. He said that he saw no condition in life which furnished greater means of serving God in our neighbour and advancing heavenward, because it keeps a man continually engaged in works of mercy, although, like the physician, he receives his salary. On one occasion, as he was entertaining us after dinner by way of recreation with agreeable topics, the conversation having turned upon innkeepers, and each having given his opinion freely on the subject, one of the party put forward the proposition, that inns were regular places of pillage. The Saint was not pleased with this observation; but as it was neither the time nor the place for administering a reproof,—and, moreover, the person in question would not have received it well,—he reserved it possibly for a more favourable opportunity, and turned off the conversation by relating to us the following anecdote: ‘A Spanish pilgrim,’ he said, ‘with a purse not overloaded, arrived at an inn,

* “For thou shalt eat the labours of thy hands; blessed art thou, and it shall be well with thee.” Ps. cxxvii. 2.

where, having fared but ill, he had to pay so highly for the little he had had, that he called heaven and earth to witness that he was imposed upon. There was nothing for it, however, but to pay; and, being the weakest, he was obliged, into the bargain, to sing small. He issued from the inn in a great state of indignation, like a man who has had his pockets picked. This inn stood where two ways met, and with another house of entertainment facing it, a cross standing in the centre. This suggested to him an idea wherewithal to relieve his vexation. "Truly," he exclaimed, "this place is a Calvary, where our Lord has been crucified between two thieves," meaning the landlords of the two inns. The master of the house at which he had not lodged, happened to be standing at his door, and, excusing him in consideration of his distress, quietly asked him what wrong he had done him, that he should apply such an epithet to him. The pilgrim, whose capacity was not limited to the use of his staff, answered quickly, 'Have done, brother, have done; you shall be the good one,' in allusion to there being a good and a bad thief, one on each side of our Lord. "I reckon you the good one, for you have done me no wrong; but what would you have me call your neighbour, who has skinned me alive?" After relating this story, he took occasion to say gently that this poor pilgrim finished his outbreak of anger with this civil turn; but that we must nevertheless avoid, as a general rule, passing a sweeping censure upon nations or professions, calling them rascals, insolent fellows, or traitors; for although we might have no one in particular in our eye, still the individuals belonging to those nations or professions felt themselves implicated in such blame, and did not like being treated in that manner.

"Our Saint, I must tell you, was so partial to inn-keepers, that, when on a journey, he very expressly forbade his attendants to bargain with them about the price of any thing, and would have them put up with any injustice rather than give them offence; and when

informed that they were quite unreasonable, charging double and treble the worth of things, he would reply, 'We must not look merely to that; what account are you taking of their attention, their trouble, their loss of rest, and obliging behaviour? We certainly cannot pay too highly for all that.' The result of this kindness of our Saint, combined with the universal reputation of his piety, was, that the innkeepers who knew him would very commonly make no charge at all, leaving their remuneration to his discretion, which almost always awarded them more than they would have asked.

"The saintly prelate had such a tender love for the poor, that in this respect alone did he appear to make some distinction of persons, preferring them to the rich, whether in spiritual or corporal matters, acting like physicians who hasten to attend those who need it most. One day I was waiting with many others for my turn, while he was hearing the confession of a poor blind old woman who begged her bread from door to door, and as I expressed my surprise afterwards at the length of time she had detained him, he said, 'She sees the things of God more clearly than many who enjoy good eye-sight.' Another day I was boating with him on the lake at Annecy, and the rowers called him Father, and conversed familiarly with him. 'Do you see these good people,' he observed to me, 'they call me Father, and they truly love me as such; O how much better do they please me than those compliment-payers who call me Monseigneur!'

"He suffered the pains of sickness with a patience accompanied with so much love and sweetness, that the slightest complaint was never heard to escape his lips, nor the smallest desire which was not conformable to the divine will. He never expressed the least regret for the services which he might have rendered to God and his neighbour had he been in health. He was willing to suffer because such was God's good will. 'He knows better,' he would say, 'than I do what suits

me; let us not interfere with Him; it is the Lord, let Him do what seems good in His eyes. O Lord, Thy will be done, not mine. Even so, heavenly Father, it is my will since it seems good in Thine eyes. Yes, Lord, I will it; may Thy law and Thy will be for ever engraven in my heart! If he was asked whether he would take some medicine, or some broth, or whether he consented to be bled, he would make no other reply than, 'Do what you will with the sick man; God has placed me in the hands of the physicians.' Never was any thing like his simplicity and obedience, for he honoured God in physicians, and knew that God has given medicine its virtue, and commands us to honour the physician, an honour which implies obedience. He stated his malady without exaggerating it by excessive complaints, and without diminishing it by dissimulation. The first he reckoned to be cowardice; the second, duplicity. When the inferior part was under the pressure of acute pain, one might read in the expression of his countenance, and above all of his eyes, the serenity of the superior region, which shone through the clouds of suffering which oppressed his body.

"The Saint being at Paris in the year 1619, a nobleman of distinction who had accompanied the princes of Savoy on their visit to that city, fell so dangerously ill, that the physicians did not think he could recover. The nobleman in this state desired to be assisted by our Saint; he bore the pains of his illness with considerable fortitude, but his mind was disturbed about matters of trivial importance. Upon which the Saint said to me, 'O how deplorable is human weakness! this man has the reputation of a great soldier and statesman, and is reckoned to possess an excellent judgment; yet you see with what trifles his mind is engrossed. He did not lament so much being ill and about to die, as the being ill and dying away from his country and home. He deplored the loss of his wife's regrets and assistance, and the absence of his children, on whom he might have bestowed his blessing. Sometimes he

longe for his ordinary physician, who understood his constitution from attendance on him for so many years. At other times he particularly enjoined, making it his earnest request, that he should not be buried at Paris, but that his body should be taken back to his own country, to be laid in the sepulchre of his ancestors. Then again he gave directions about his epitaph, about the arrangements for his removal, and the ceremony of his funeral. He complained of the air of Paris, of the water, of his medicines, of the physicians, surgeons, and apothecaries, of his servants, of his lodging, of his room, of his bed, of every thing. In short, he could not die in peace because he was not dying in the place where he wished to die. When he was told that he had every possible assistance he could desire both for body and soul, that those whose absence he regretted would but have added to his grief by their presence,—to every topic of consolation proposed he had admirable answers ready whereby to aggravate his sufferings and add poignancy to his sorrow, such ingenuity did he display in tormenting himself. He expired at last, fortified by the sacraments and tolerably resigned to the will of God.' The Saint made this comment to me, 'It is not sufficient to will what God wills; we must will it in the manner He wills, and in every one of its circumstances. For instance, when ill, we must will to be so since such is God's pleasure, and we must will to suffer this particular complaint and not another, in this special place, and at this time, as well as among such persons as it shall please God. In fine, our law in every thing must be the most holy will of God. Such is the lesson I learnt on this occasion.'

"Our Saint was in the habit of saying that the meanest of all temptations was the temptation to discouragement. When the enemy has made us lose all heart for our progress in virtue, he makes cheap work of us, and soon pushes us to the precipice of sin. To correct this fault, the Saint said one day to some one, 'Be patient with all, but specially with yourself; I

mean that you ought never to be disturbed at your imperfections, and must always arise again with renewed courage. There is no better way of accomplishing the spiritual life than always beginning again, never thinking we have done enough. And in fact, how shall we ever bear with patience our neighbours' defects, if we are impatient with our own? How shall we be able to reprove others in a spirit of sweetness, if we correct ourselves with spite, sharpness, and ill-temper. He who is disquieted at the sight of his own imperfections will never correct himself; for correction, to be profitable, must proceed from a tranquil and sedate spirit.'

"Common minds," observes M. de Belley in another place, "live well when all goes according to their wishes; but true virtue shows itself in the midst of contradictions. The more contradictions our Saint met with, the greater was his tranquillity, and, like the palm-tree, the more he was beaten by the winds, the deeper he struck his roots. Here are his own expressions on the subject: 'For some time past, full of oppositions and contradictions which have come to break in upon my tranquillity, I have seemed to derive from them a sweet and delightful peace, which nothing can surpass, and I see in this a presage of the approaching establishment of my soul in its God, which is truly not merely the great, but the only ambition and passionate desire of my heart.'"

THE SAINT'S DETACHMENT FROM EARTHLY THINGS, AND HIS
LOVE OF POVERTY.

"There are earthly desires and heavenly desires. Of these last we cannot have too great abundance; they are so many wings which raise us to God; they are those wings of the dove which the prophet asked of God, to fly after eternal rest. For the others, which regard only temporary and perishable things, and which bind us to earth, we cannot have too few. St

Augustine calls them the glue of the spiritual wings. From these sort of desires our Saint was exceedingly free. Here are his own words: 'I wish for very little, and what I wish for I wish very little. I have scarcely any desires; and if I had to begin life again, I should wish to have none. Earth, indeed, is of little value, rather I should say of none, to him who aspires to heaven, and time but a shadow to him who is tending to eternity.'

"Some one speaking, one day, in presence of our Saint, of a prelate of high rank in the Church, said that he was setting all his sails to reach the dignity of cardinal, and that his absence was the cause of some confusion in his diocese. 'Would to God he were a cardinal already!' said the Saint. I asked him why 'Because,' he replied, 'he would then think of something better.' 'What!' I exclaimed, 'of becoming Pope next? And who is to absolve him from such a sin as that?' 'That is not what I mean, but the care of souls, the art of arts, in the exercise of which we can do the Lord the greatest service.' 'But will not this dignity,' I replied, 'interfere with his attention to it?' 'It need not,' he rejoined; 'since in our days St. Charles has so eminently succeeded; but what I mean is, that, no longer having the pursuit of this honour in his head, his heart would recal him, and he would bethink himself of his pastoral obligations, which are of divine right, and would attend to them with undistracted attention, which would give great edification to the Church.'"

M. de Belley adds, that St. Francis's prognostic proved a true one. "Having attained when he least expected it the coveted honour, this prelate valued it little, and recalling to mind the importance of his episcopal duties, was about to return to devote himself to them, when God, accepting his good will, called him from this world, after he had enjoyed, with little satisfaction for six months, what he had sought and laboured for incessantly for thirty years."

St. Francis, when free to choose, was as desirous to

shun, as this prelate was to seek, the dangers and responsibilities of exalted station. If he had returned from Lyons, where he died, we learn from M. de Belley that he entertained the design of retiring into solitude, and after employing so many years in the functions of Martha, giving up the rest of his days to the vocation of Mary, resigning his bishopric to his brother, who already acted as his coadjutor.

"When we are in our retreat," he says, writing to the prior of a monastery near his contemplated hermitage, "we will serve God with breviary, rosary, and pen. O who will give me the wings of a dove to fly away to this sacred rest, and to breathe a little under the shadow of the cross! There shall I await the moment of my change: *Expectabo donec veniat immutatio mea.*" "Alas!" adds M. de Belley, "God was preparing for him a far other rest, the fruit of his labours."

"In the year 1619, when he visited Paris with the princes of Savoy, he made a stay of eight months, during which time it is impossible to tell the amount of the services which, to the glory of God, he rendered to souls. The sweetness of his character and conversation, which attracted every one like some heavenly perfume, so charmed the Cardinal de Retz (Archbishop of Paris), that he desired to make him his coadjutor. Not expecting any opposition from our Saint, he pre-disposed the king in favour of his project. But the holy bishop knew how to divert this blow with such consummate skill, that he left the cardinal, though disappointed at his refusal, full of admiration of his virtue. He alleged various excuses for his declining the offer; among others the following, which pleases me much; that he did not think he ought to change a poor wife for a rich one; and that if he left his wife, it would not be to take another, but to be without one, according to the counsel of the apostle, *Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife*;† adding, that having bestowed all his

* "I will expect until my change come." Job xiv. 14.

† 1 Cor. vii. 27

affections upon his church, he could not conceive any for another.

"His bishopric (as has been observed), owing to the depredations of heresy, was extremely poor. To him this was matter of rejoicing, and we find him on one occasion adroitly refusing a pension which the king (Henry IV.) pressed upon his acceptance. An ecclesiastic, he was in the habit of saying (and St. Paul declares the same of every Christian), who has food and raiment, and is not satisfied therewith, does not deserve the name of an ecclesiastic, nor to have God for the portion of his inheritance and of his cup. 'My bishopric,' he said, 'is worth as much to me as the archbishopric of Toledo; for it is worth to me heaven or hell, even as that of Toledo to its archbishop, according as we each of us acquit ourselves of our obligations. *Godliness with contentment is great gain.*' My revenue suffices for my necessities. Any thing more would be too much. Those who have more, only have it to keep a larger establishment. They themselves, therefore, do not profit by it, but their servants, who often eat without doing any thing for the interests of our crucified Lord. He who has less, has less account to give. He who has less superfluity, has less to give, and less solicitude to reflect to whom he should give. For the King of glory will be served and honoured with judgment. Those who have great revenues, sometimes spend so much that they are as poor as I am by the end of the year, if they do not run into debt into the bargain. If we desire only what nature requires, we shall never be poor; if what opinion requires, we shall never be rich. To get rich in a short time and with very little trouble, we must not heap up money, but diminish cupidity, imitating sculptors, who perform their work by retrenching, and not painters, who execute theirs by adding. He will never have enough to whom enough suffices not.' Above all, he could not bear to hear an ecclesiastic complaining of poverty; 'for,' said he, 'he entered into orders with

a benefice, or with a patrimonial title sufficient for his maintenance. Such being the case, what cause of complaint has he? If he produced a false title, or accepted an insufficient benefice, what he ought to complain of is his own deceit or imprudence, not his poverty. But let him, after all, remember that when he received the tonsure he declared, in presence of the Church triumphant and militant, that God was the portion of his inheritance; and what can he want who has God and His providence for his portion? What can suffice him to whom God is not sufficient?

"Although they of Geneva withheld from him nearly all the revenue of his bishopric and that of his chapter, I never heard him make any complaint; so little were his affections fixed on earthly things, nay, so little attention did he pay them. He knew how to be satisfied with the slender remnant of his bishopric. 'Is not twelve hundred crowns of rent, after all, a good deal?' he would say. 'Are not these fine leavings? The apostles, who were much better bishops than we are, had not so much. We are not worthy to serve God at our own expense.' He longed only for the conversion of these souls, rebellious to the light of truth which shines only in the true Church. Sometimes, speaking of his Geneva, his 'poor, dear Geneva,' as he always called it, notwithstanding its rebellion, he would say, sighing, 'Give me the persons, and take the rest. Would to God we had lost the remainder, so as the Catholic religion had as free an entrance into Geneva as it has into La Rochelle, and that we had a little chapel there' (this was many years before the capture of the latter place). This sweet hope he ever cherished in his bosom, 'It would then soon make progress.' Never were those words of the Psalm *Super flumina Babylonis* (By the waters of Babylon) sung in choir, but his thoughts reverted to that unhappy city, the seat of the bishops his predecessors; not that he desired to be installed there in their pomp and wealth, for he esteemed the shame of the cross above all the riches

of Egypt, but because he was touched with inward grief of heart for the loss of so many souls. When he said his office in private, and recited this same Psalm with his chaplain, tears flowed from his eyes.

"I was wondering, one day, how he could support his house with so slender a revenue. 'It is God,' he said, 'who multiplies the five loaves.' Pressing him to explain to me how this took place, 'It would be no miracle,' he replied very sweetly, 'if I could explain it. Are not we in a blessed condition to live thus by miracle? *It is the mercies of the Lord that we are not consumed.*'"

"One day he said to me, showing me a coat which had been made for him, and which he wore under his cassock, 'My people work little miracles, for out of an old coat they have made me quite a new one; have not they made a smart one?' 'This miracle,' I replied, 'seems an improvement upon that which the children of Israel experienced, whose clothes did not wear out during the forty years they abode in the desert; for here we have old ones made new again.'

"He said that the covetousness of the eyes had this evil in it, that it never looked below itself, but always above; and so those who were infected with it never enjoyed any peace or solid content. The moment a man desires to be greater or richer than he is, the dignity and property he possesses seems as nothing to him; and when he has attained the object of his wishes, his appetite is sharpened by indulgence, and his mental dropsy makes him increase his thirst by drinking; so that he is constantly moving on without ever reaching the goal, death coming sooner than the accomplishment of his ambition and his hopes. The Saint had not only set bounds to his desires, but either he had no desire for exaltation, or he looked upon his station as much above his desires. He often marvelled (such was his humility) that God should have permitted him to be raised to the dignity he held, setting so high a value

on it that he trembled when he reflected upon the burden which had been laid upon him. As he entertained a great esteem for his neighbour, he wondered at beholding himself placed as superior over persons whom he believed to be better fitted and more worthy than himself."

THE SAINT'S FIFTY AND SPECIAL DEVOTIONS.

"It was a saying of the Saint, 'We must never talk of God nor of the things which concern His service,—that is, of religion,—at random, and by way of a topic, and to make conversation, but always with deep respect, high esteem, and genuine feeling.' Again, Speak always of God as God, that is, with reverence and piety; not to give yourself importance or to set yourself up to preach, but in a spirit of sweetness, charity, and humility.' The first piece of advice is addressed to those who speak of religious matters as of any other subject of conversation, without regard to time, place, or persons, and with no other object than to talk and pass away time; a wretched abuse, of which St. Jerome complains in his day, saying, that all the arts and sciences had their adepts, to whom alone it appertained to speak with authority about them; it was only Holy Scripture and theology, which is the root of science, which were so unworthily treated, that you heard people at table deciding questions relating to them, and that not only in private houses but even in taverns; hair-brained youths, ignorant mechanics, silly old men,—in short, the vulgar of all classes,—taking upon themselves to give their opinion on the deeper mysteries of the faith. The second counsel is for those, whether men or women, who affect to pass in society for being very learned and deeply versed in spiritual and mystical science, maintaining their opinions with warmth, ill-temper, sharpness, irritation, obstinacy, pride, making more noise than those who are more in

the right than themselves, but who have not such strong heads and loud voices; as if it added any thing to the solidity of an argument to make a great bluster. The Saint concluded by saying, 'Never, then, speak of God or of religion formally or as a topic of conversation, but always with attention and devotion; and this I say to correct a notable vanity observable in many persons, who make a profession of piety, and who on every occasion utter holy and fervent words in a conventional manner and without giving them any thought; and after having uttered them they fancy themselves to be such as their words testify while it is no such thing.'

"He considered that among the marks of predestination, one of the strongest was a love of hearing the word of God according to the teaching of Jesus Christ.* To hearken to the voice of the Shepherd is the mark of a good sheep, who will one day be placed at the right hand to hear those words, *Come, ye blessed of My Father*. But he would not have us to be idle and profitless hearers of this word. He would have us put it in practice; and he said that God was prepared to grant our prayers in proportion to our efforts to perform what he set before us by the mouth of the ambassadors of His will. Among those who take a pleasure in hearing the word of God, he remarked that a defect is apt to insinuate itself, namely, acceptance of persons; 'as if this salutary bread and this water of heavenly wisdom were not as profitable to the soul when brought by a raven as by an angel, I mean by a disagreeable and bad preacher as by a good and pleasing one.' St. Charles Borromeo always read the Scriptures on his knees, as though he had been listening to God speaking from Mount Sinai in the midst of lightnings and thunders; and our Saint, whether speaking in public or writing or reading in private, desired that we should ever handle it with the very greatest reverence. He did not like a preacher plunging at once into the mystical sense before he had first expounded the literal;

* John viii. 47; xiv. 21.

this, he said, was to construct the roof of a house before laying its foundation. Holy Scripture was to be treated with more solidity and reverence."

M. de Belley proceeds to relate an instance of his exactness in the application of any text of Scripture.

"Preaching one day before him, I happened to apply to the contagious example of bad company that saying of the prophet, *With the holy thou wilt be holy, and with the perverse thou wilt be perverted*;* a very common application. I perceived at once that he was not satisfied; and when we were alone he asked me why I had so strained this passage, knowing well that such was not the literal meaning. I replied that it was in the way of allusion. 'So I understand it,' he replied; 'but you ought at least to have noticed that that was not the literal sense; for according to the letter it refers to God, who is good—that is, merciful—towards those who are good, and evil—that is, severe—towards those who are evil; punishing the one, and showing mercy to the others.' Conclude how exact he himself was when handling the word of God, since he was so strict with others,—he who was incomparably more indulgent towards others than towards himself.

"He recommended spiritual reading as a food of the soul, which was at hand every where and at all times, and which could never fail us; whereas we cannot always hear preaching, or have guides and spiritual directors, nor can our memory always recall exactly all we have heard in sermons and in public or private exhortations. He wished us to provide ourselves with books of piety, as so many matches of holy love, and never to let a day go by without making use of them. He would have us read with great respect and devotion, regarding them as so many missive letters sent by the saints in heaven to point us out the way thither and encourage us on our journey. It must be confessed, that there are no safer directors than those departed ones who speak with such a living voice in their writings. For the

* Psalm xvii. 26, 27.

most part, they were the interpreters of the will of God, and His ambassadors for dispensing His word, the bread of which they broke to little ones with their tongues, which were to them as pens; while, after death, their pens serve as tongues by which they speak to us. If any obscurity or difficulty is to be met with in their works, we may have recourse, for its understanding and elucidation, to the assistance of some able and experienced person. He strongly recommended reading the lives of the saints; saying, that it was the Gospel in practice. We shall at the least derive from their perusal a great love for piety, provided we read with humility and a desire to imitate the saints. Like the manna, we find therein whatever flavour pleases our taste. From so many different flowers it is easy to extract, like industrious bees, the honeycomb of excellent piety. Although the lineaments of the Spirit of God in souls are as various, and even more so, than the features of our faces, still it is true that we can draw from them something to imitate, or at any rate wherewithal to admire the grace of God, which has worked such great things in and by them. And if this admiration should be all that we derive, would not this be an excellent way of praising God and the operations of His grace?

"He was in the habit of saying, speaking of the two sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist, that they were like the two poles of the Christian life: that by the first we renounced all sin, surmounted all temptations, and stripped ourselves of the old man; and that by the second we put on the new man, Jesus Christ, to walk in justice and holiness, going on from virtue to virtue to the mountain of perfection. He admired much that thought of St. Bernard, who wished his religious to attribute to the frequent use of this sacrament of life all the victories they gained over their vices, and all the progress they made in virtue, saying that it was there that they drew water with joy from the Saviour's fountains. He said, that those who sought excuses to

dispense them from frequent communion, were like those invited guests in the parable who excited the anger of the master of the house, although their reasons of refusal seemed tolerably plausible. Some say they are not sufficiently perfect; and how are they to become so, if they keep away from the source of all perfection? others plead their weakness, but this is the bread of the strong; others, infirmity, but here is the physician; others, that they are not worthy, but does not the Church put these words into the mouths of the holiest: *Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof** others, that they are overwhelmed with business, but here is One who cries to them, *Come to Me all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you*† others, that they fear to receive to their condemnation, but have they not reason to fear being condemned for not receiving? others allege humility, but this is often a false humility, like that of Achan, which was opposed to the glory of God while feigning to fear to tempt Him. And how are we to learn how to receive Jesus Christ well except by receiving Him, as we learn how to do every thing else well by dint of doing it? His sentiments with regard to the communion of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist were very sweet and tender; and reverential fear was so tempered by divine love, that it no way interfered with confidence, or confidence with reverence. He ardently desired that we should annihilate ourselves in receiving the Holy Eucharist, after the pattern of the Saviour's self-annihilation in communicating Himself to us; bowing the heavens of His greatness, that he may accommodate and unite Himself to our lowliness.

"Having been born during the octave of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, he had always a peculiar devotion towards her. From his tenderest years, we learn from his life, he devoted himself to honour her, both by special suffrages and by a singular love

* Matt. viii. 2.

† Matt. xi. 28.

for purity, consecrating himself to God by a vow of perpetual virginity under the protection and aid of this Queen of Virgins. You know that it was on the feast of the Immaculate Conception that he received episcopal consecration, and during this holy ceremony that interior unction of which mention is made in his life. I have often heard him preach on the glories of the Mother of God; and I must confess that his incomparable sweetness seemed specially to fit him to discourse of this Mother of all benediction. And, indeed, there was nothing he so strongly recommended his spiritual children as devotion to the Blessed Virgin.

"It was a common saying of his, 'We do not sufficiently bear our dead in mind, our dear departed ones; and the proof of this is, we do not talk often enough of them. We turn away from the subject as gloomy; we let the dead bury their dead; with us their memory dies away with the sound of the tolling bell, and we never reflect that a friendship which death can dissolve never was a genuine friendship, Scripture even telling us that true love is stronger than death. Then it is that praise can no longer be suspected of flattery; and as there is a species of impiety in lacerating the reputation of the dead like wild-beasts who disinter bodies to devour them, so is it a mark of piety to record their good qualities, for we are thus stirred up to imitate them.' When any of his friends or acquaintance died, he was insatiable in speaking well of them and recommending them to the prayers of every one. He was in the habit of saying, that in this one act of mercy the other thirteen were included: 'Is it not,' he said, 'in a manner to visit the sick, to obtain by our prayers the relief of these poor souls in purgatory? Is it not to give drink to those who so intensely thirst for the vision of God, and who are in the midst of those fierce flames, to give them a share of the dew of our prayers? Is it not to feed the hungry, to forward their deliverance by the means which faith suggests to us? Is it not truly to ransom prisoners? Is it not to clothe the

naked, to procure for them a garment of light, even the light of glory? Is it not to exercise a singular hospitality, to obtain their introduction into the heavenly Jerusalem, and render them citizens of the saints and of the household of God in the eternal Sion? Is it not a greater service to place souls in heaven than to bury bodies in the earth? As for the spiritual works, is it not a work the merit of which may be compared to giving counsel to the simple, correcting those who err, teaching the ignorant, forgiving offences, and bearing injuries? And what consolation can we give to the sorrowful of this world, comparable to that which our prayers afford to those poor souls which are under the pressure of so heavy an affliction?

“His opinion, however, was, that we might draw more consolation than terror from the thoughts of purgatory. ‘Most of those,’ he said, ‘who so much dread purgatory, dread it from interested motives, and from the love they bear themselves, more than from regard to the interests of God; and this comes from the practice of preachers who generally dwell upon the sufferings endured there, rather than upon the happiness and peace of the suffering souls. It is true that their pains are so great, that the most excruciating torments of this life are not to be compared to them; but at the same time the inward consolations they enjoy are also so great, that no prosperity or earthly enjoyment can equal it. 1. The souls enjoy an abiding union with God. 2. They are perfectly resigned to the Divine Will, or rather, their will is so entirely transformed into that of God, that they can only will what God wills; so that were Paradise thrown open to them, they would rather plunge into hell than appear before God with the stains they still behold upon themselves. 3. They undergo a loving and voluntary purification, because such is the good will of God. 4. They desire to be where they are, in the manner which is pleasing to God, and for as long as He pleases. 5. They are impeccable, and incapable of the least movement of impatience or the

least shade of imperfection. 6. They love God better than themselves or any other thing, with a perfect, pure, and disinterested love. 7. They are comforted by angels. 8. They are secure of their salvation, in the possession of a hope whose expectation cannot be confounded. 9. Their exceeding bitterness is accompanied with a profound peace. 10. If as respects pain it is a species of hell, it is a heaven as respects the sweetness which charity diffuses in their hearts; a charity stronger than death and more powerful than hell, whose lamps are fire and flames. 11. Happy state, more to be desired than dreaded, since its flames are flames of love and charity. 12. Terrible, nevertheless, since they delay the soul's ultimate consummation, which consists in seeing God and loving Him; and seeing and loving Him, to praise and glorify Him for all eternity.' He recommended strongly on this subject the admirable treatise on purgatory of the blessed Catherine of Genoa. I often read and re-read it by his advice attentively, and always with a new relish and fresh light; and I must own that I never read any thing which satisfied me so thoroughly. I even recommended it to some Protestants, who were much pleased with it; and one learned man, in particular, told me that had this treatise been placed in his hands before his conversion, he should have been more moved by it than by all the arguments he had heard upon the subject.

"But if this be so, it is said, why be so desirous to assist the souls in purgatory? Because, notwithstanding these advantages, the state of these souls is one of great affliction, and truly worthy of our compassion; besides which, it is because the glory they will give to God in heaven is retarded. These two motives ought to stir us up to obtain for them a speedy release by our prayers, our fasts, our alms, and every kind of good work, but particularly by offering for them the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

"He advised the persons who consulted him to join all the confraternities of the places in which they found

themselves, in order to participate in all the good works performed by them. He re-assured them as to the mistaken fear they entertained of sinning, if they did not acquit themselves of certain practices which are rather recommended than commanded by the rules of these confraternities. 'For,' said he, 'if some of the rules of religious orders do not bind under pain of mortal or even of venial sin, how much less the statutes of confraternities! What is recommended to the members of them is of counsel, not of precept. There are indulgences for those who perform them, which those who neglect them lose; but this loss is altogether exempt from sin. There is much to gain, and nothing to lose.' He wondered at so few persons joining them. He attributed it to two causes. Some refrain from scrupulosity, fearing to take upon themselves a yoke they could not bear; others, from want of piety, looking upon those who joined them as hypocrites.

"It was one of his maxims, that great fidelity towards God was displayed in fidelity in little things. 'He who is economical of pence and farthings,' he said, 'how much more so will he be of crowns and pistoles!' And what he taught he practised carefully, for he was the most punctual man that was ever seen. Not only in the celebration of the services of the Church, at the altar, and in choir, but also when he said his office in private, he observed the minutest ceremonies accurately and faithfully. He followed the same rule in his demonstrations of civility; he never omitted any thing. One day that I complained to him of his showing me too much honour, 'What account do you take,' he replied, 'of Jesus Christ, whom I honour in your person?' Above all he recommended me to study the Pontificale. 'It is for the pastors,' he said, 'who are the salt of the earth and the light of the world, to show themselves patterns in all things.' He had often in his mouth that admirable saying of St. Paul, *Let all things be done decently and according to order.*"*

* 1 Cor. xiv. 40.

We cannot better conclude than with a reference to his favourite exercise of the presence of God, and to the abundance of consolations with which this eminent Saint was favoured.

"He set such a high value on the exercise of the presence of God, that he recommended it as our daily bread. I say daily bread, because, as in feeding our bodies we add bread to our other viands, so also is there no spiritual exercise which combines more conveniently and profitably with our actions than that of the presence of God. Ah," he exclaimed, 'this is the delightful exercise of the blessed, or rather the perpetual exercise of their beatitude, according to those words of our Lord, *Their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven.*'* For if the Queen of Saba considered the servants and courtiers of Solomon as very happy from being always in his presence, listening to the words of wisdom which fell from his lips, how much greater is the happiness of those who are continually attentive to the holy presence of Him *on whom the angels desire to look,*† although they continually behold Him! a desire which keeps up in them a perpetual hunger to behold more and more Him whom they contemplate; for the more they behold Him whom they desire, the more they desire to behold Him, never becoming satiated with their continual satiety. Our Saint believed that the majority of the failings in their duty, of which pious persons are guilty, proceed from their not keeping themselves sufficiently in the presence of God."

The following confession abundantly proves that in that holy presence he found the life of his life and an anticipated Paradise.

"If you knew," he said one day to an intimate friend, 'how God treats my heart, you would thank His goodness for it, and beseech Him to give me the spirit of counsel and of fortitude to execute the inspirations of wisdom and of understanding that He gives

* Matt. xviii. 10.

† 1 Pet. i. 12.

me.' He frequently said the same thing to myself, though in other words. 'O, how good,' he exclaimed sometimes, 'is the God of Israel to them that are of a right heart, since He is so to those who have such a miserable one as I have, which gives so little heed to His grace and is so bent down to earth! O, how sweet is His spirit to the souls that love Him, and who seek Him with all their power! Truly *His name is as oil poured out*. There is no need to wonder if many courageous hearts follow Him with so much devotion, that is, run with such swiftness and delight *after the odour of His perfumes*. O, what great things does the unction of God teach us; and that with so sweet a light, that it is difficult for us to discern whether the sweetness is more agreeable than the light, or the light than the sweetness! I tremble, however, from fear lest God should be giving me my paradise in this world. I do not really know what adversity is. I never saw the face of poverty. The pains I have suffered have been no more than scratches, which have only ruffled the skin. Calumnies are crosses formed of wind, whose memory perishes with the sound. It is little to have been free from afflictions, but I am also grieved with temporal and spiritual goods; I am up to my eyes in them; and in the midst of it all I remain insensible and ungrateful. O, I beg of you, help me sometimes to thank God, and to beseech Him that I may not eat my choice morsel (literally, white bread) first! He well knows my frailty and my weakness, and therefore He treats me as a child, giving me sweet things along with milk instead of more solid food. When will He give me grace, after having enjoyed so much of His favour, to sigh for a little under the cross? since to reign with Him we must suffer with Him. We must indeed either love Him or die; or rather, we must love Him in order to die, that is, we must die to all other love to live for His love alone, and to live for Him alone who died that we might live an eternal life in the arms of His love. O what a blessed thing it is to live in God only, to

labour for God only, and to rejoice only in God. Henceforward, with the help of God's grace, no one shall have any hold upon me, and no one shall be any thing to me, save in God and for God only. I hope to arrive at this when I shall have been truly humbled before Him. Live, God! it seems to me that all is as nothing to me save in God, in whom and for whom love souls with the greater tenderness. O, when will this natural love of kindred, of worldly propinities and considerations, of correspondence, of sympathies, and of graces, be purified and reduced to the perfect obedience of pure love, and of the good pleasure of God? When shall this self-love no longer sigh after sensible presence, proofs of affection, and external demonstrations, but remain fully satisfied with the unvarying and immutable assurance that God abideth for ever? What can presence add to a love which God has made, and which He sustains and preserves? What marks of perseverance can one require in a state of unity which is God's work? Presence or distance will make no change in the solidity of a love which God Himself has formed.'

"I confess," adds the good Bishop, "that my heart, when listening to all these words from the mouth of our Saint, burned within me, like the hearts of the disciples going to Emmaus; for was not this indeed to fling coals of fire into my face? O, when shall the time come when in heaven we shall love unchangeably and without intermission Him who has loved us with an everlasting love, and who has drawn us to His love having compassion upon us!"

THE END.

